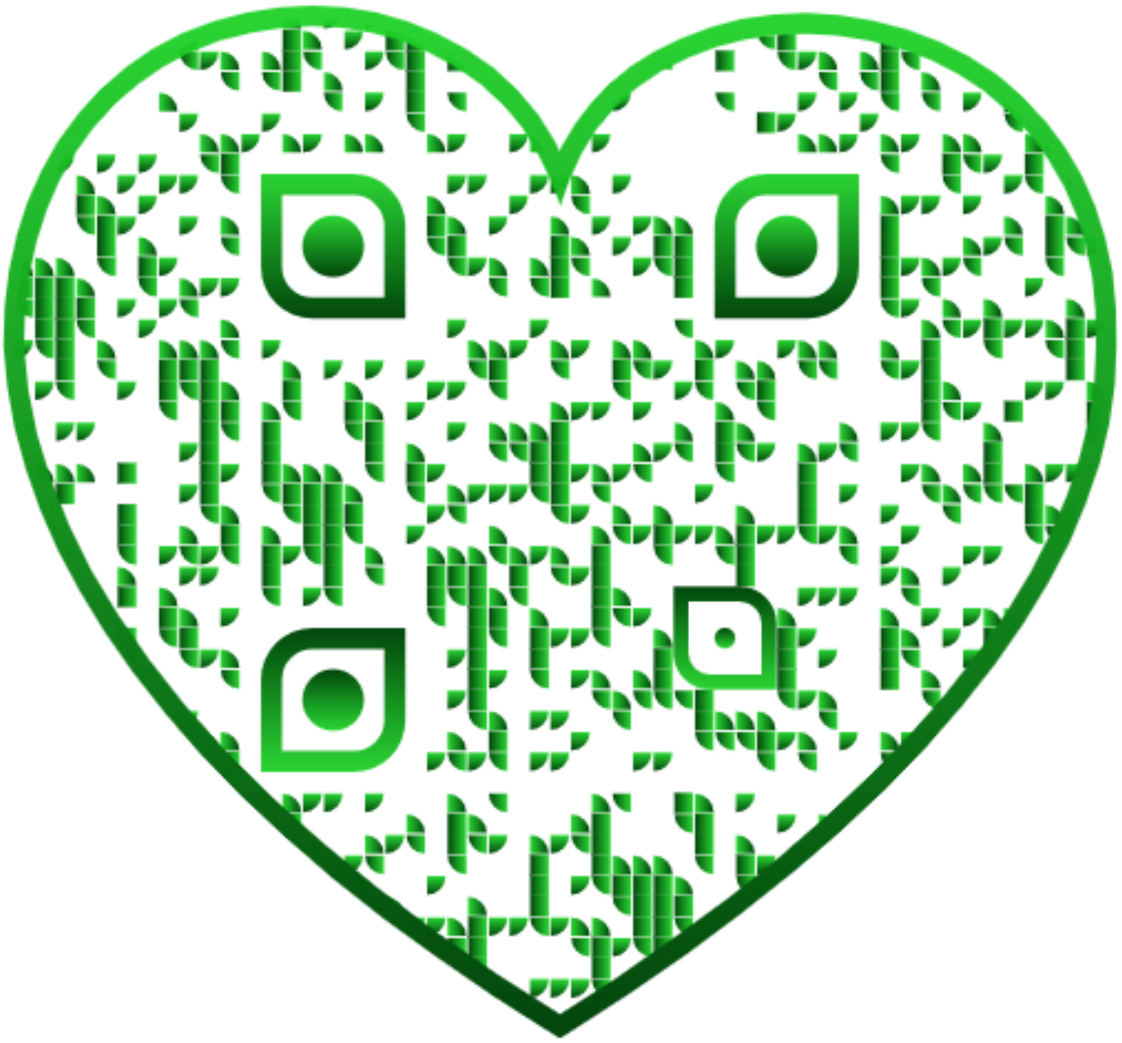
LOST CIVILIZATIONS

The Secret Histories and Suppressed Technologies of the Ancients

JIM WILLIS



LOST CIVILIZATIONS

The Secret Histories and Suppressed Technologies of the Ancients

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments

Photo Sources

Preface

Introduction

PART I: OUT OF THE MISTS OF TIME

PART II: EVIDENCE IN STONE

Egypt and Other African Origins
Indonesia and Australia
India and Pakistan
Crete and Greece
Europe
China and Japan
Mesoamerica
South America
North America
The Pacific
Antarctica

PART III: EVIDENCE IN STORY

Eden
First in Flight
Lost Lands
Going Underground
Lost Gods and Warriors

PART IV: COULD WE BE NEXT?

PREFACE

I met a traveler from an antique land,
Who said—"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert.… Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal, these words appear:
My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

—*Ozymandias,* by Percy Bysshe Shelley

When it comes to exploring lost civilizations, Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Ozymandias* concisely and succinctly encapsulates the theme as only poetry can. An ancient "King of Kings," who once sported a "frown, and wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command," constructed a monument to his glory—a glory he thought would last forever. But now, "nothing beside remains." Were it not for an inscription on a monument, no one would remember who he was let alone what he stood for, when he ruled, or the extent of his reign. People once populated his mighty civilization, worked and worried, rejoiced and despaired, married and had children, lived and died. They all considered their lives to be normal. They assumed their culture would continue forever. It was all they ever knew.

But then it ended. It was soon covered by “the lone and level sands” that stretched far away into the distance. Time marched on.

For a while, perhaps, people read about the fabled civilization in their history books. But it eventually faded from history to legend, and from legend to myth. Then it was forgotten. Were it not for a decaying monument or stories told by a few elders, Ozymandias and his empire would effectively have been erased from memory.

But there survived a crumbling ruin of a stone monument. And legends spoke of past glory.

Evidence in stone. Evidence in story. It wasn’t much. But it was something. And those who came after, if they were to ever learn the full story of who they were and from whence they came, needed to remember.

One of the first questions we ask as children is, “Where did I come from?” After receiving a superficial answer involving storks or hospitals, we usually put the subject aside and get about our lives. But the question refuses to remain filed away. It still lives on in our subconscious. Without really thinking about it, we spend a great deal of energy and time trying to answer it.

Who are we? Where did we come from?

If we turn to religion or science, we are told an origin story. But can that story be believed and accepted? Superficially, maybe, but hiding beneath the surface of our daily lives are doubts that manifest themselves in strange and twisted ways. Because we don’t know where we came from we decide to at least try to leave something behind, expressed in accomplishments, family, work, money, some type of legacy we refer to as our “body of work,” or, at the very least, a pithy saying on a tombstone.

This is not a healthy way to live. It is what Socrates referred to as “an unexamined life, not worth living.” Perhaps it would be far better for our mental health if we made an attempt to answer the question.

This book is about trying to do just that. It’s about exploring our origins. If we can discover that we are part of a bigger picture, it might give meaning to our lives by pointing to a purposeful future. We’ll be dealing with the newspaper reporter’s five important questions:

Who are we?

What gives our life meaning?

Where did we come from?

When did we begin our journey?

Why does life seem so difficult at times?

If we can even begin to answer those questions, we can come to understand that we are engaged in something meaningful and important—that life makes sense and has a greater, even a cosmic, purpose—that our lives matter.

Before we begin this journey we will need a roadmap to guide us.

Following an introduction in Part I, there are two main sections to this book. Part II involves archeology—the evidence in stone. Part III involves mythology—the evidence in story.

Archeologists usually don't care much for mythology. You can't dig up a myth and carbon date it, let alone subject it to peer review. It's far more comfortable to consign mythology to the fertile imaginations of primitive people. But when you do so, the story that emerges from your shovel and pick is limited in terms of context and meaning. You can address some of the questions—the who, what, where, and when. But you can't talk about why. And why is the most important question. That's what keeps us up nights, pondering meaning.

To ask why we need to turn to mythology—the stories that attempt to explain meaning and purpose. In doing so, we might even unearth deeper answers about who and when.

In Part III, then, we'll turn to stories that have stood the test of time. We'll look at the old religious texts. We'll listen to the old legends. We'll assume their genesis was rooted and grounded in historical time and that they are stories about things that actually happened. With repetition and the passing of years, they may have accumulated a lot of window dressing, but if we strip some of that away it is amazing what we can learn.

After doing all the theoretical groundwork, however, we'll move on to what is perhaps the most relevant and important part of the book. It's only human conceit that makes us decide past civilizations were somehow different than our own. They rose, they grew, and they fell. What makes us different from them?

Perhaps they have something to teach us. Maybe we can learn lessons that will help us skirt round the boggy swamps of previous failures. In Part IV we'll review the reasons past civilizations fell and became lost to history. Then we'll open the current newspaper. We'll look at ourselves in a mirror to determine if we can see any similarities to what has gone before.

Ancient Chinese scholars tell us that we can only reach forward as far as we can remember backwards. In these increasingly troubled times there are definite signs—some on the distant horizon and some close at hand—that things are not as comfortably complacent as they once must have appeared to lost civilizations that also refused to note the signs of the times.

Our destiny is not set in stone. The myths of our civilization are still in the making. The future, as they say, awaits. What does it hold?

It's up to us. But first we must obtain the information we will need in order to choose wisely. That's the information that awaits in the following pages. Let's begin together.

INTRODUCTION

> A civilization is generally defined as an advanced state of human society containing highly developed forms of government, culture, industry, and common social norms. Of course, not all scholars agree with this definition.
>
> —Study.com

I once had a fascinating conversation with a man who had grown up not knowing his father. He had been told stories and over the years had developed a fairly comprehensive narrative about who his father was, but he didn't really think much about the reality of his mental picture until the day he discovered a bundle of his father's journals tucked away in his mother's attic. They proved to be a comprehensive record that painted a complex portrait that was totally at odds with the man who my friend, up to that point, had pictured in his mind. The most disturbing detail was that his father died of a disease that is sometimes passed down to offspring.

"How did that make you feel?" I asked.

I'll never forget his reply.

"I felt as though I no longer knew who I was."

Learning about important pieces of information missing from our life story can do that to us. When we uncover significant events and episodes that previously have been hidden from our view, especially if they could affect our vital health and well-being, it makes us wonder who we really are. We feel as though we are suffering from partial amnesia.

It isn't always anyone's fault. Some of these hidden episodes might result from the fact that folks didn't know any better. There's no one to blame. When we learn about them we simply chalk it up to good fortune that we discovered them when we did.

But sometimes it turns out that people, for reasons of their own, have

deliberately deceived us. Then the discovery makes us angry.

"Why didn't someone tell me?" we think. We realize that our true identity was hidden from us because of someone else's personal agenda.

Unfortunately, when it comes to the history of humankind—the story of our cultural identity—both situations come into play. Sometimes no one knew that a different narrative or a forgotten part of the story even existed until it was dug up and examined in the light of day.

But sometimes the story turns almost sinister. Someone digs up the truth, refuses, for whatever personal reasons he might use to justify his actions, to believe it, and makes a personal, if tragic, decision to cover up the facts.

The science of archaeology has advanced rapidly in the last hundred years. In the process, we are learning more and more about who we are and how we came to be the people we are today. This is all well and good. We all benefit. Archaeologists publish their findings, submit them to peer review, establish their reputations, write their textbooks, and train future teachers. Over the course of time an established narrative evolves.

The accepted narrative of our species, the story most of us has been taught, goes something like this: *Homo sapiens* evolved from early bipedal hominins that lived in Africa, probably Ethiopia, more than 2.8 million years ago. Maybe even longer. They learned to use fire and simple stone tools, migrated into Eurasia in three or four massive migrations, and gave rise to at least four different branches of human species. Maybe more. Three of these branches either went extinct or merged into our species. We spent the next vast amount of time learning to cope with life in various climates ranging from western Europe to eastern China and all the way down to Australia. Those coping strategies involved everything from making tools to clothing ourselves.

Some forty thousand years ago, we emerged from the great painted caves of western Europe with a spiritual vision of our place in the cosmos, and things were never the same. We developed the capacity to think in symbolic terms, invented art and music, and slowly began to develop social strategies that grew from family structures to tribes and eventually to cities and then states. Along the way we invented agriculture, domesticated animals, developed specialized labor practices, learned how to write, invented economics, and finally arrived at the crowning jewel of existence: modern

civilization.

It was a gradual process that culminated in the advanced world we know today, which consists of Facebook, Twitter, the threat of nuclear war, terrorism, stress, obesity, overpopulation, pollution, political parties, and smart phones.

Sarcasm aside, the story we have been taught is firmly entrenched. It involves a slow but steady growth upward from cave man to hunter-gatherer to agriculturalist to urban civilization. We are at the top of the ladder. We have arrived. From here on, the only great changes in store involve improved technological prowess.

Recognizing this story for what it is is important. Confronting it is essential because the facts are starting to pile up rather quickly that it is almost surely a false narrative. Large episodes are missing. Consider just a few.…

Göbekli Tepe in Turkey was built before the agricultural revolution started. It is undoubtedly the work of a very sophisticated, orderly, organized civilization that existed more than five thousand years before either Stonehenge or the Pyramids, a time when people were supposed to be primitive hunter gatherers. They knew a lot about many things that we have forgotten. How could primitive people have accomplished such a feat?

Australia could only have been settled by people who built and knew how to use boats. But it was populated by artistic and spiritually sensitive folk way before the time seafarers were supposed to have lived. How did boats suddenly appear, seemingly out of thin air, and why did those people want to live in Australia?

The Amazon rain forest supposedly was a virgin wilderness when Europeans first arrived to explore it. But satellite images from outer space have penetrated the dense tropical growth to reveal the work of a thriving civilization that once built pyramids, shaping and transporting blocks so large we would be hard pressed to construct such edifices even with today’s technology. How did people in a forgotten period of history accomplish such a task? And why?

In the American Southwest, a mysterious people we used to call Anasazi felt the need to clear perfectly straight and intricately banked roads through pristine desert. The lines they followed were so efficiently designed that if a

pile of boulders, or even a mountain, was in the way, they went right over them rather than follow a much easier path around the obstacle. They constructed way stations along the routes. But the Anasazi didn't have wheeled vehicles or domesticated beasts of burden. Why did they go to the trouble to construct arrow-straight roads when simple paths would have worked just as well?

These are only a few of the anomalies we will be exploring in the coming pages. In some cases, they offer new, exciting, and intriguing mysteries that help us better understand who we are and how we got to be the way we are today. Our ancestors were obviously very clever and imaginative people. They have a lot to teach us.

But in many cases the evidence we are about to explore has been swept under the proverbial rug or hidden away in museums and dusty file cabinets. Why hasn't it become common knowledge? Why isn't it taught in schools and symposiums? Even if we don't have all the answers, one would think that the excitement generated by such mysteries would be, in and of itself, worth teaching. Unknown technologies, submerged or buried cities, forgotten lore, the lure of giant skeletons, and other mysterious, historical anomalies would go a long way toward engaging the interest of future archeologists and historians. Specialists have seen the evidence. In some cases, they have written about it and even photographed it. Why has it been covered up?

I have come to believe that there is an active and destructive force at work that I call the conspiracy of silence. Facts that don't fit the common and accepted story are often considered troubling. So they are filed away and forgotten, creating what in effect could very well be a world-wide "Dark Ages," a long, long period of lost history. If this is true, what we call civilization today is not a discovery of new, innovative ideas, but a recovery of them.

There is a well-known joke in the field of archaeology. An archaeologist finds an artifact that threatens the status quo and says, "That artifact can't be there because it's not supposed to be there!"

Unfortunately, that anecdote is not very funny anymore because it happens time and time again. When I was researching my book *Ancient Gods*, I actually had a well-known and respected professor at a major university write to me, telling me that he conveys to his students what he considers to be a valuable lesson. If, while working on a major American

archaeological dig, they go below the Clovis layer and find human artifacts, he warns them to cover them up. If they try to go up against the entrenched Clovis First cabal, they will destroy their teaching careers. Few colleges want to hire mavericks, let alone grant them tenure.

That, sad to say, is more common than is usually thought.

Consider this. Our accepted story tells us that anatomically modern human beings have been on earth for about two hundred thousand years. Recently, that number has been pushed back by a few courageous anthropologists who have great confidence in their facts, techniques, and reputations. But they've taken a long time and really labored over their results in order to stave off criticism from their colleagues.

Now take this a step further. What we call "our" civilization is said to have started only six to eight thousand years ago, with the growth of agriculture and the birth of cities in Mesopotamia and Egypt. The industrial age, the hallmark of civilization, didn't start until the eighteenth century. The whole age of flight, from the Wright brothers to the Apollo missions, is only a hundred years old. The World Wide Web didn't become readily accessible until 1991.

But remember that our remote ancestors have been around for two million years and maybe much more than that. That's a very long time! We could drop any number of civilizations into that immense time period and never find evidence of them if they are buried beneath the sands of time. Like islands in the sea, sometimes only their tops stick up for us to see. The vast bulk of their mass lies below the surface.

So when we catch a glimpse of a curiosity, an artifact, a misplaced remnant, either in the archeological record or the subtle turn of a phrase from a forgotten myth or legend, if it doesn't fit within our accepted story, it's a very great temptation to ignore it, condemning it to obscurity. Why risk attracting the sarcastic, often vicious, barbs of contemporaries who have a vested and monetary interest in making sure their articles are featured in the next professional journal or who selfishly don't want to be proved wrong after a lifetime of teaching?

Fortunately, we live in a day when things are finally starting to loosen up a little. A stubborn few refuse to play the game. The traditional story we have been taught is rapidly falling by the wayside, buried under the logic and sheer tenacity of those who will not let accumulating facts be buried.

Thanks to television shows and social networks, these days it's harder to keep things safely hidden away in obscurity Before 1950, anyone who suggested Viking ships, let alone a whole host of predecessors going back thousands of years, were capable of navigating the North Atlantic with confidence, sailing to North America from Europe, was thought to be a dreamer. Harvard professor Barry Fell learned about that the hard way when he published *America B.C.* as late as 1977. In April of that year, the *New York Times* published a scathing review by Glen Daniel. Without confronting any of Professor Fells' facts, he wrote a piece that fairly dripped with criticism, insulting not only Fell but the book-buying public as well: "No bookseller yet known to me from Brentano to Blackwell has had the courage to label a series of shelves formally 'The Maniacal Fringes of Archeology.' If he did he would, alas, find it a best-selling corner of his store."

Before 2007, anyone who even suggested a comet once threatened the very existence of life on earth a mere 12,800 years ago was laughed out of the symposium. Now, although the theory is still ridiculed on the Internet, it is attracting scientists in large numbers, even though back in June 2011 the *Earth-Science Review* published an article entitled, "The Younger Dryas Impact Hypothesis: A Requiem." Given the nature of the debate that is still very much ongoing, it would seem that the funeral might have been somewhat premature.

On and on it goes. "Barbarians" must have raised the standing stones of Europe and Mesoamerica because at that time there were no advanced civilizations. "Primitive" American Indians woke up one morning and decided to build great cities that boasted residents in greater numbers than either Rome or London of that time because there were no advanced cultures in America.

Tradition dies hard. But it is dying. The death may be slow and painful, but the symptoms are now visible.

It's time to look seriously at facts that in some cases have been hidden away and in others are just coming to the surface. It's becoming plain that we are not the pinnacle of civilized success. Others have come before us. They have seen the destruction of their civilization. Sometimes it happened gradually. Sometimes almost overnight. But they saw it rise. And they saw it fall.

Will we learn from them, or will we follow in their footsteps? Did they

sow the seeds of their own destruction, seeds that eventually grew to maturity and brought about their downfall?

The next question becomes obvious. Are those seeds starting to flower in our generation as well? Are we destined to be the next lost civilization?

Only time will tell, but that time might be running out. Those who do not know their past, it is said, are destined to repeat it. If we can spot the sickness in former civilizations, the cultural cancer that led to their death, we might be in time to effect a cure in our own.

But first we need to spot the sickness. Is there a disease inherent in the human race—a disease that is always fatal? No human civilization has ever endured forever. Is there a historical limit to the timespan built into every human endeavor? If so, does it consist of a finite number of years, or is it built into the rapid evolution of exponential technological growth? When intellectual capacity outstrips the ethical and moral ability to behave responsibly, is the end in sight?

Only by a study of the past will we find out.

PART I:
OUT OF THE MISTS OF TIME

As mankind began to develop more complex ways of life, and as cities began to increase in size and complexity, a new type of society emerged. These societies are known today as civilizations.

—kidspast.com

How Do You "Lose" a Civilization?

Right at the outset, any study of lost civilizations runs into a serious problem involving language and meaning. What do we mean by "lost"? Göbekli Tepe was lost, deliberately buried under many feet of rock and rubble, but Egypt was never lost. The Pyramids have stood right out in the open ever since their original construction. Can we make any sort of argument that the civilization that built them has ever been "lost"?

Yes, we can, and we will, despite the sure and certain knowledge that some will read these words and promptly close this book. The fact that people have always lived within sight of the evidence of very early civilizations doesn't mean that they have any memories of those who were the originators of it. The agendas and motivations of what we might call the "first people" have, in many cases, been lost in the mists of time. They are completely different from those who have grown up in the shadow of the monuments.

When European explorers first encountered the Mississippian mounds of Cahokia, for instance, they asked the so-called First Nation tribal people who had built them.

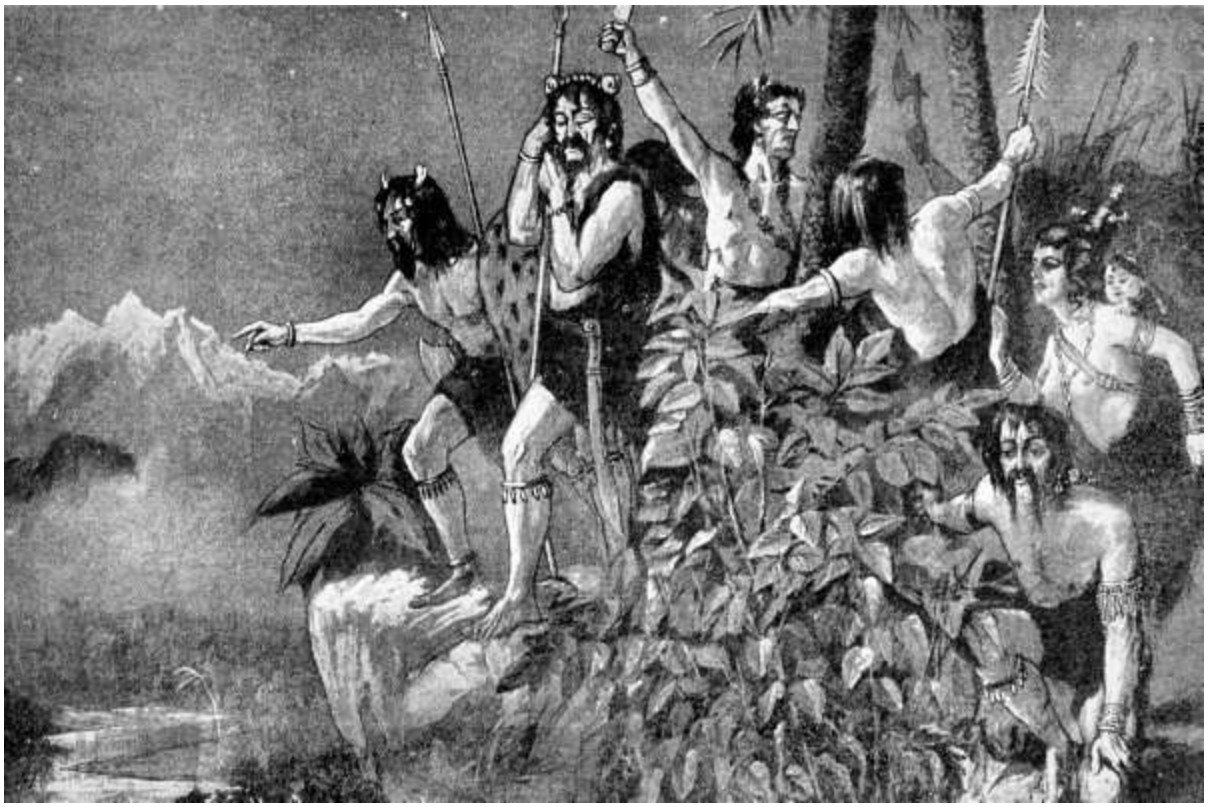
"We don't know," they were told. "They have always been here."

Egyptians speak of the *Zep Tepi*, the "First Time." They refer to a golden age when gods ruled the world after the waters of the primordial darkness had receded. The gods proceeded to banish the darkness and bestow the gift of civilization. Egyptian culture was born. Aside from artifacts, monuments, and ancient documents, however, details about that golden age of early civilization are, for all practical purposes, lost to memory, even though people have lived and thrived in the area for thousands of years.

To offer yet another example, India is an ancient land. People have lived there ever since the first upright hominins migrated out of Africa, but memories of its original inhabitants are shrouded in mists of obscurity. It used to be the accepted theory that the original population of Stone Age India was invaded by a light-skinned, blue-eyed, "Aryan" race sometime during the second millennium B.C.E. The newcomers were thought to have entered the Indian subcontinent from the northwest through the famous Kyber Pass, bringing with them a "superior" European language that, when mixed

together with the local tongue, produced that most spiritual of languages, Sanskrit. This was the language of the ancient texts known today as the Vedas, followed later by the Upanishads.

This was called the "Aryan Invasion" theory. European intellectuals assumed it resulted in the growth of a sophisticated civilization. Now some believe that an "Aryan" race never existed to begin with and that the whole invasion theory was based on the fact that early scholars misinterpreted the Sanskrit word *Aryas*. Being racially biased to begin with, Europeans assumed that the original people of India were too primitive to have built the sophisticated civilization unearthed by archaeologists.



The "Aryan invasion" theory holds that white, blue-eyed people immigrated into the Indian subcontinent, settling there and integrating their language and culture, which gave rise to the Sanskrit language and the Upanishads (illustration from *Hutchinson's History of the Nations*, c. 1910).

Who were the first people to live in ancient India, then? Obviously, they were, in many cases, the direct ancestors of the current inhabitants. We cannot point to any obvious cultural break, but in reality, that early civilization is now "lost."

For our purposes, then, when we talk about a “lost” civilization, we are referring to people whose motivations, belief systems, agendas, social structures, and, in some cases, even technologies remain unknown and mysterious, even though their direct descendants might exist to this day.

What Do We Mean by “Civilization”?

Now comes another word problem. What exactly is a “civilization”?

Although many experts insist on a one-size-fits-all definition, the truth is that there is no such definition anymore. A common meaning used to exist, but, as is often the case, language evolves and changes with the times.

Today, most specialists will agree that the term refers to a human society that demonstrates a high level of proficiency when it comes to cultural and technological development. This includes modern concepts such as the construction of villages or cities, probably the use of writing, and certainly technical improvements in areas such as housing, sanitation, political governance, specialized labor forces, and overall organizational systems.

In that sense, we can talk safely about “Mesoamerican civilization” or “Mycenaean civilization,” but when we do so, myopic self-aggrandizement too often rises to the surface. When we say a culture demonstrates “civilization,” we mean they are like us. We thus label other cultures “primitive,” meaning that they haven’t yet risen to “our” standards.

In other words, if a culture chooses to live under different conditions than we do, they are not up to our level of evolution. They are not “civilized.”

This is not a scientific assumption. It is a personal bias.

Settled agriculturists are declared to be civilized. Nomadic herders, who move with the seasons, are not. This bias, often racially motivated, fits the “slow but steady growth” story of human evolution. People evolve from hunter-gatherers to agriculturists to urban sophisticates. That’s the pattern that is taught and accepted as gospel truth. Anyone who lives at the top of the ladder, alongside us, is “civilized.” Those who don’t are “primitive.”

What happens when a culture decides that our way of life is not to be envied but rather avoided? What if they choose to skip the squalor of city streets, power-hungry rulers, ruinous economics, and finicky infrastructure? Does this make them primitive, or might it indicate that they’re smarter than

we are?

The influential Australian archaeologist Gordon Child, who popularized such phrases as “Neolithic Revolution,” once identified ten attributes of what he called civilization. Five he called primary. Five are secondary. These attributes became so well known that many today simply assume they are the defining mark of a civilization. Those cultures that demonstrate these attributes are civilized. Those that don’t, aren’t.

Primary Characteristics

1. Urban settlements
2. Full-time specialists not involved in agricultural activities
3. Concentration of surplus production
4. Class structure
5. State-level organization (government)

Secondary Characteristics

6. Monumental public building
7. Extensive trading networks
8. Standardized monumental artwork
9. Writing
10. Development of exact sciences

Unfortunately, this list reveals a lot of personal bias masquerading as scientific truth. In the coming pages, we will meet many societies that demonstrate these attributes whose people hardly fit the notion of being “civilized” and many that have chosen not to follow these guidelines that are civilized to their very core.

The Red Paint people, who lived along the shores of the North American East Coast, for instance, seem to have been quite a seafaring culture. Anyone who develops boats and navigational techniques sufficient to brave the rough waters of the North Atlantic certainly deserves to be called civilized. Such an effort demands organizational skills and curiosity far superior to those who later huddled in the festering alleys of London and Rome. Is it fair to call urban dwellers “civilized” just because they lacked the ability and will to improve their surroundings, while those who ventured forth into the unknown must bear the label “primitive”?

The human condition is much too complex to be labeled and neatly boxed up by so-called professionals. They are just as subject to interpretive bias as the rest of us, and just because a seemingly systematic list makes it into a textbook doesn't mean the issue is forever settled.

Any culture that has endeavored to explore the sea should be considered civilized. This re-creation of a Chumash boat is a good example of how the Indigenous people of Southern California ambitiously explored the coast and Channel Islands long before the Spaniards arrived.

Civilization is not necessarily the predicted end of a slow and steady process that begins in the mud and concludes in a gleaming city. Ours is probably not the only evolutionary path. Given the conditions now existing in the modern world, it's maybe not even the best one.

Therefore, for the purposes of this book, at least, this is what we mean when we use the word "civilization":

A civilization is any group of people who come together over time to demonstrate a capacity for uniquely human qualities that distinguish them from their animal ancestors. Such qualities include, but are not necessarily limited to, attributes such as shared moral values,

technology, an appreciation for beauty in art, a spiritual yearning for meaning in the face of a limited life span, and a search for ultimate reality.

This may not be the currently accepted definition, and it is certainly not the only one. It may not even prove to be workable outside the parameters of this book. However, controversial though it may be, it's the one we'll use.

In practical terms, what that means for our purposes is that the Clovis culture, who as far as we know never built cities or planted fields, who never invented an alphabet or built a ruling elite, are now, by virtue of the artistic tools they created, the care they lavished on their ailing children, and the trade networks they developed elevated to civilized status and are worth respectful study. No longer will we consider them "primitives" who were on their way to becoming us before they mysteriously disappeared beneath a black mat of ash, dust, and comet debris.

South American shamans who live in so-called "primitive" conditions are now to be approached with the respect due to those who have observed our crowded, noisy, and stinking cities and have chosen to live and thrive closer to nature. They are the "civilized" ones, not the old anthropologists who patronizingly wrote about them from assumptions of superiority.

A civilization doesn't always make the best decisions. Sometimes, it even willfully chooses to make bad ones—but it makes them, and the results of those choices become an example for us to follow.

Sometimes, we can learn from their unfortunate mistakes. In that case, we may be able to correct our course of history before we follow their footsteps into oblivion, but once in a while, we can discover that they were doing something right, and we can also learn from that. Whatever the case, they have much to teach us.

How, Where, and Why Do Civilizations Arise?

The word "civilization" comes from the French word *civilisé*, which means "civilized." That, in turn, is derived from the Latin word *civiltas*, which means a "citizen" who lives in a *civitas*, or city. From this, we learn that civilization has long been associated with cities. Cities are nothing more than physical places that formed when and where people lived together in

permanent proximity.

That's only a rough start, however. Some civilized people historically want nothing to do with cities. The Navaho, for instance, are among the most civilized people on Earth, but their preference has always been to move out away from other people. It's not that they're antisocial. They just like the peace and serenity of living apart from others in places of beauty.

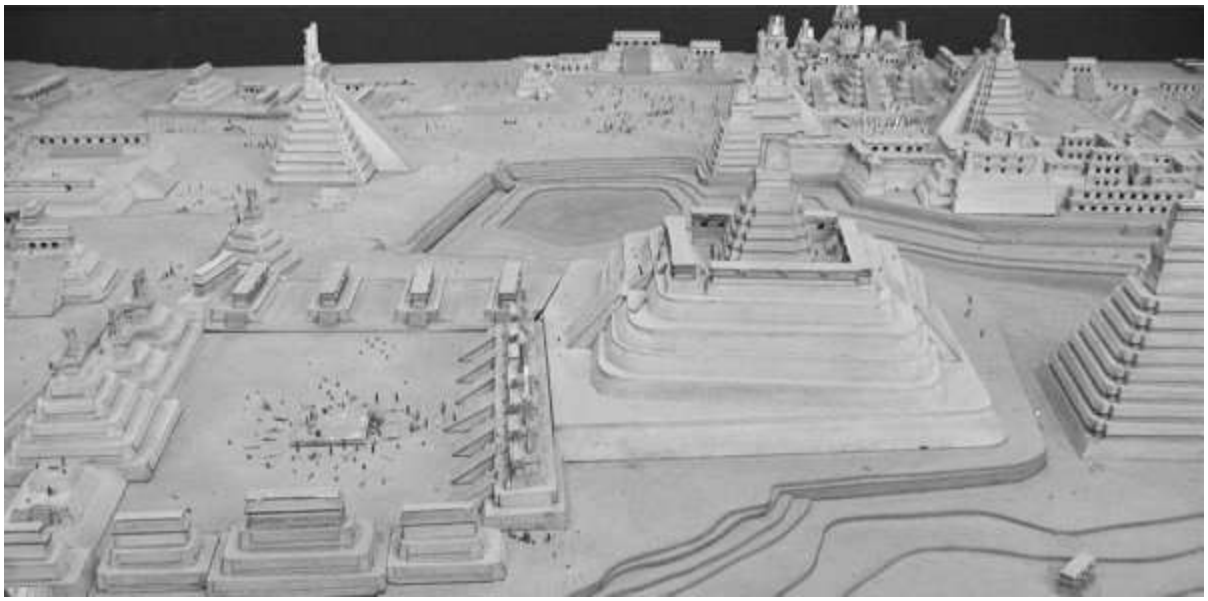
Most civilizations have initially grown up near water. When it comes to cities, the three primary rules of real estate have always been in play—location, location, location. The Tigris and Euphrates, the Nile, the great rivers of Europe, China's Yellow River, South America's Amazon, and North America's Mississippi, along with many others, have all proved to be resource-rich and trade-compatible places to settle down and grow.

That's not always the case, though. Some civilizations have been centered in pretty inaccessible places. The mountaintops of Peru, for instance, to say nothing of Turkey's remote Göbekli Tepe, Guatemala's Tikal, or the canyon lands of the American Southwest, seem to offer no feasible reason for settlement. Deserts and jungles made building a real chore, but still, people went there and built a civilization. Why? No one knows for sure.

Some people argue that earth energies have something to do with it. Although we moderns have in many ways lost touch with such forces, ley lines and energy lines have long been a part of the folklore of ancient civilizations.

The word "ley" was first used by Alfred Watkins in his book *The Old Straight Track* to describe what he considered to be straight-track roads created by early humans to help them find their way from place to place. He never used the term *ley line*. It is usually replaced by the term *energy line.*

On June 30, 1921, he sat on the outskirts of Blackwardine on a warm summer afternoon, staring at a map. A landscape that had been hidden for thousands of years suddenly appeared to transpose itself over the familiar geography. A web of what he would later call "old straight tracks" appeared to transfix his map, connecting places and structures that once shook to the sound of ancient chants and prehistoric rituals.



This model of what the Mayan city of Tikal may have looked like in the eighth century C.E. shows that these people were clearly civilized, even though the later Spanish invaders likely did not consider them as such. Nonetheless, to be "civilized" does not mean a people need impressive buildings and cities.

He believed that the system of "old straight tracks" was a human invention, an infrastructure created by early humans to get from one place to the next, much like a modern highway system in any industrialized nation today. He called these tracks *leys*, choosing from the many Anglo-Saxon variants such as *lay, lee, lea,* or *leigh,* and believed that they could often be followed just by following place names on a map—Wemb*ley*, Oak*ley*, Brad*ley*, for instance, or *Ley* Rock in Cornwall. While doing his fieldwork, he discovered that his tracks often passed through ancient structures, standing stones, circles, and even churches.

In other words, he thought he had discovered evidence that led to the remains of a lost civilization.

I once bicycled from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic. I used a lot of back roads, of course. Twenty years after my trip, I tried to locate some of the roads I took. Many of them were now superhighways. Civilization has a tendency to do that kind of thing. It buries old landmarks. It is very possible that old civilizations are buried beneath new construction, but the broad geographical impetus that caused a civilization to arise in the first place remains to give birth to a new one. St. Louis and Cincinnati, for instance, were once homes to ancient peoples who settled there for many of the same reasons modern people do. They both offer a good, practical location to live

and conduct trade.

When it comes to searching for lost civilizations, they may be difficult to find because they have long since been buried by layers and layers of modernity. It's often not a wonder that we don't find more evidence. It's a wonder that we find any at all. When we do, we should seek answers, not bury the finds in a museum basement or cover them up because they might interfere with the timing of a new construction project. Such evidence represents a forgotten part of our past. We need to study it in order to discover who we are. Anything else is extremely shortsighted.

WHAT MAKES THEM FALL?

Any number of causes can lead to the downfall of a civilization. By studying them, we might even come to the conclusion that a few such causes may be rising to the surface, with dire consequences, in our own. Let's examine a few of them.

Catastrophes

Sixty-five million years ago, either a comet or an asteroid that measured up to nine miles across slammed into Earth. The explosive impact, coupled with resultant dirt and debris that was thrown into Earth's atmosphere, caused such worldwide calamity that a mass extinction event took place. When the dust settled, up to 80 percent of every plant and animal species on Earth was destroyed. Most land-based dinosaurs, the most prominent of those species, soon died off due to starvation and climate change. A few avian varieties managed to survive, and their descendants now flock to our backyard bird feeders. Some shrewlike mammals managed to live by burrowing deep underground. They eventually evolved into all warm-blooded animal life on Earth, including the species that now threatens to again bring about worldwide pollution and climate change without the aid of an extraterrestrial boost from the cosmos.

Luis and Walter Alvarez first proposed that the mysterious K-T boundary, a thin layer of sediment and chalk ("K" represents the German word *Kreide*, which means chalk) debris found around the world, was the result of this impact. When the massive amounts of material thrown up in the blast settled to Earth, choking out vegetation, it marked the end of one era

and the beginning of another. The Cretaceous (K) age of the dinosaurs was over. The Tertiary (T) had begun.

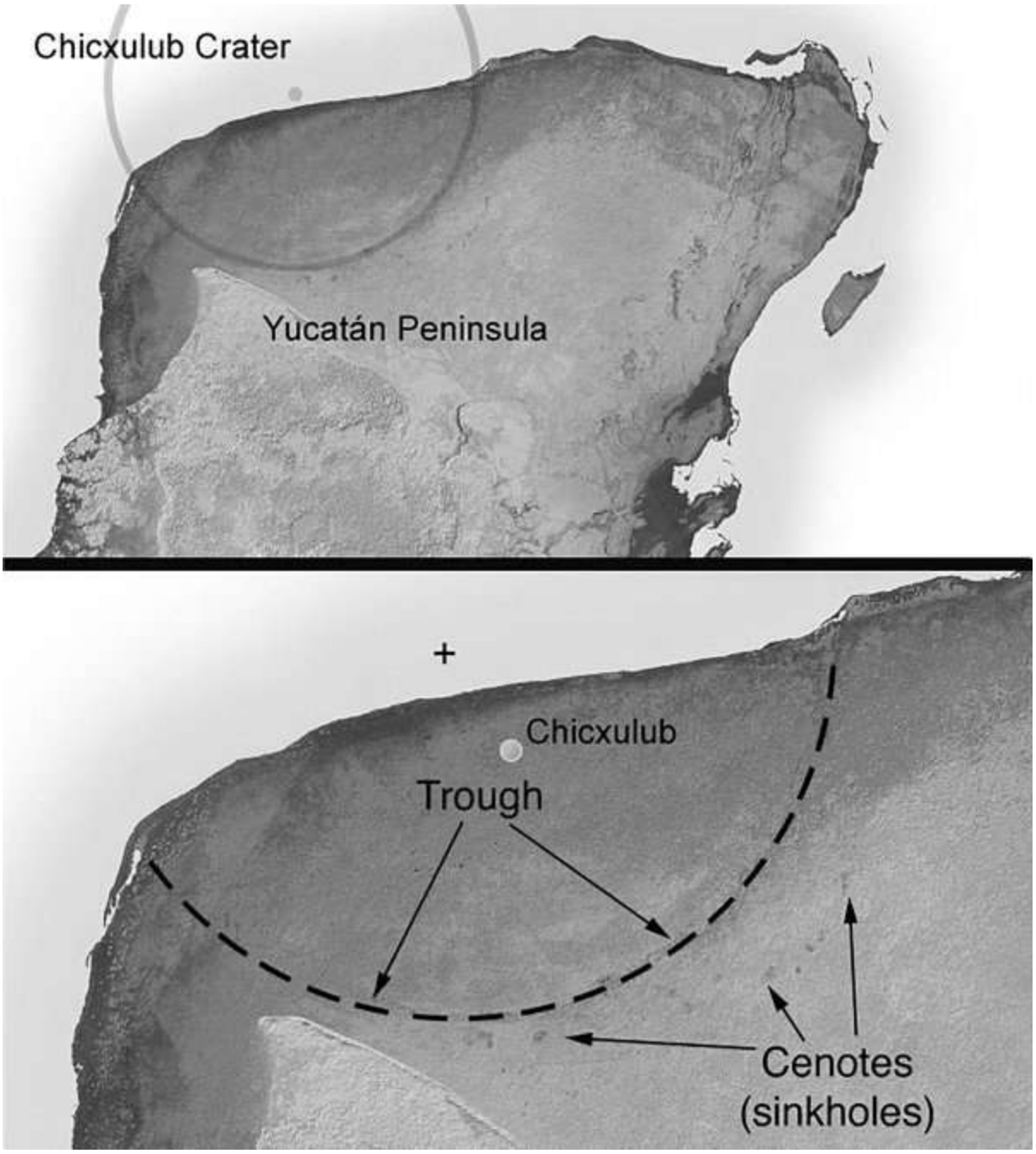
However, when the Alvarezes first published their claim back in 1980, they were severely and viscously attacked by the science community. For ten years, they were ostracized, criticized, and metaphorically pulverized by smug “experts” who would not even look into their evidence.

“Show us the impact crater!” they shouted.

When the crater was discovered near the present town of Chicxulub in the Yucatán Peninsula of Mexico, the critics, usually without apology or any similar public act of contrition, quietly faded away into the background. The Alvarez hypothesis is now almost universally accepted.

Catastrophic accidents happen. We are assured by those who claim to know that the Chicxulub impact was an event that only happens once every hundred million years or so, so we have nothing to worry about. How “they” know that is a mystery, but “they” assure us it is so, so most of us meekly acquiesce and go about our daily business without worrying too much or even looking up toward the skies once in a while just to check.

Given that science operates the way it does, it is no surprise that when a group of prominent specialists suggested that a similar, if not quite as spectacular, event happened just 12,800 years ago, they were met, and continue to be met, with outright scorn and ridicule. The Comet Research Group is not part of the so-called “lunatic fringe.” They are not remotely associated with what is loosely called the “alternative history” folks. Their members include nuclear analytical chemist Richard Firestone of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory; the late geophysicist Allen West; Wendy Wolbach, a professor of inorganic chemistry and geochemistry at DePaul University; Albert Goodyear, now a retired professor of archaeology at the University of South Carolina; oceanographer Jim Kennett of the University of California; astrophysicist Malcolm LeCompte; geologists James Teller and Ted Bunch; and more than fifty other leading researchers who together represent a wide range of academic disciplines.



Evidence of the Chicxulub crater off the Yucatán Peninsula was discovered by geophysicists Antonio Camargo and Glen Penfield, who had been exploring for oil. Their work reveals a crater 93 miles (150 kilometres) in diameter and 12 miles (20 kilometers) in depth that impacted Earth about 66 million years ago.

Their findings can best be summarized like this:

- Thirty thousand years ago, an immense comet entered our inner solar system, escaping the gravitational pull of Jupiter and Saturn, which often attract and protect us from such objects, and was

captured by the Sun's gravitational field. The comet was locked into a large orbit around the Sun.

- Twenty thousand years ago, due to both internal and external stresses, it broke apart and spread its debris in a huge arc, which still orbits the Sun. You can visualize it as a large doughnut consisting of fragments both large and small, with the Sun in the middle. Twice a year, every June and October, Earth crosses this debris field and encounters some of the smaller fragments. Most of them are tiny objects that harmlessly burn up in our atmosphere. We call it the Taurid Meteor Shower. What we see are called "shooting stars." John Denver once wrote a song about such an event in which he claimed to see it "raining fire in the sky."
- Not all the fragments, however, are harmless. One such fragment exploded over Siberia on June 30, 1908. Called the Tunguska Event, it flattened 770 square miles of forest. One can only imagine the devastation if it had exploded over a populated area. Even bigger segments are said to be in an area of the stream that comes around every twelve thousand years or so. We're scheduled to meet up with them sometime between 2035 and 2040.
- A large fragment embedded in this stream was responsible for the Younger Dryas impact 12,800 years ago. Breaking apart as it was captured by Earth's gravitational pull, at least four of its segments exploded into the ice cap that was then beginning to recede along the northern border of the United States. Other segments struck the European continent all the way into Turkey and beyond. Just like the Chicxulub impact, it caused both local and worldwide devastation. When the dust eventually settled, Earth's great mega fauna were gone. Mastodons and mammoths, saber-toothed cats, giant sloths, and a host of other species were no more. Their food supply was destroyed. In the midst of what we might call a form of nuclear winter, Earth's temperature plummeted, and a new Ice Age suddenly began that would last for more than a thousand years. It was called the Younger Dryas, named after a flower, Dryas Octopetala, that grows in cold conditions and became

common in Europe during this time.

If Earth today were struck by such a comet, if we were immediately thrown into a chilling Ice Age, our infrastructure and principal cities destroyed, our way of life unalterably devastated, what would we do?

Here's the point of all this. People and, at least according to our definition, civilizations were alive on Earth 12,800 years ago. One example, as we shall soon see, was the Clovis people, who were thriving across North America. Below the debris boundary has been found ample evidence of their beautifully worked stone tools. Above, nothing. Their culture was wiped out by a gigantic cataclysm.

Now ask yourself this question: If Earth today were struck by such a comet, if we were immediately thrown into a chilling Ice Age, our infrastructure and principal cities destroyed, our way of life unalterably devastated, what would we do?

Remember this cataclysm. It's going to figure prominently into the stories of Göbekli Tepe, Egypt, Mesoamerica, North America, and a number of other lost civilizations. It might even help us find an answer to the enigmatic destruction of a place called Atlantis.

Economics and Internal Strife

It doesn't take an unavoidable catastrophe to end a civilization. Sometimes, we are capable of bringing destruction upon ourselves with no help at all from outside forces. As a matter of fact, it seems to be an inevitable rule.

The traditional history we're taught in school tells us that the Agricultural Revolution spawned the technology that elevated us from a primitive lifestyle and made possible all the great things we experience in today's more civilized times, but some contemporary historians such as David Christian, author of *Origin Story: A Big History of Everything*, suggests a different tale. According to the studies he presents, although the

discovery of systematic agricultural methods pumped a lot of energy into the human experience, promoting population explosion and the development of cities, it may also have led to our inevitable end because of the consequences of the resulting inner strife due to economic inequalities. Wealth and power resulting from surpluses and accumulated goods and possessions made the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. With no middle-class glue in the center to hold things together, the cultural spinning top can wobble off the table into oblivion.

Consider this message from an unknown Egyptian scribe, written more than a thousand years before the common era. He described why it was good to be a scribe:

> One says to the peasant, “Give grain!”
>
> “There is none,” (the peasant) replies.
>
> He is beaten savagely. He is bound, thrown in the well, submerged head down. His wife is bound in his presence. His children are in fetters. His neighbors abandon them and flee.
>
> It’s not a pretty picture.

The dirty little secret of the Agricultural Revolution is that it forced people to settle in and live in a particularly good place for farming. Inevitably, the population expanded because it’s a fact of nature that when the food supply increases, so do the numbers of those species that utilize it. In human cultures, this leads to cities. Cities develop specialized labor forces to supply the needs of people who are working in the fields. Specialized labor forces lead to economic infrastructures involving production, supply lines, and manufacturing. Pretty soon, an upper class arises, who organizes all this. That leads to a power elite and eventually a strong, central government that has the resources to exploit new farming territories and fund armies for protection. Inevitably, warfare breaks out because of the resulting squabbles over who owns what. Wealth is needed to support the whole system, and only three ways exist to accumulate it:

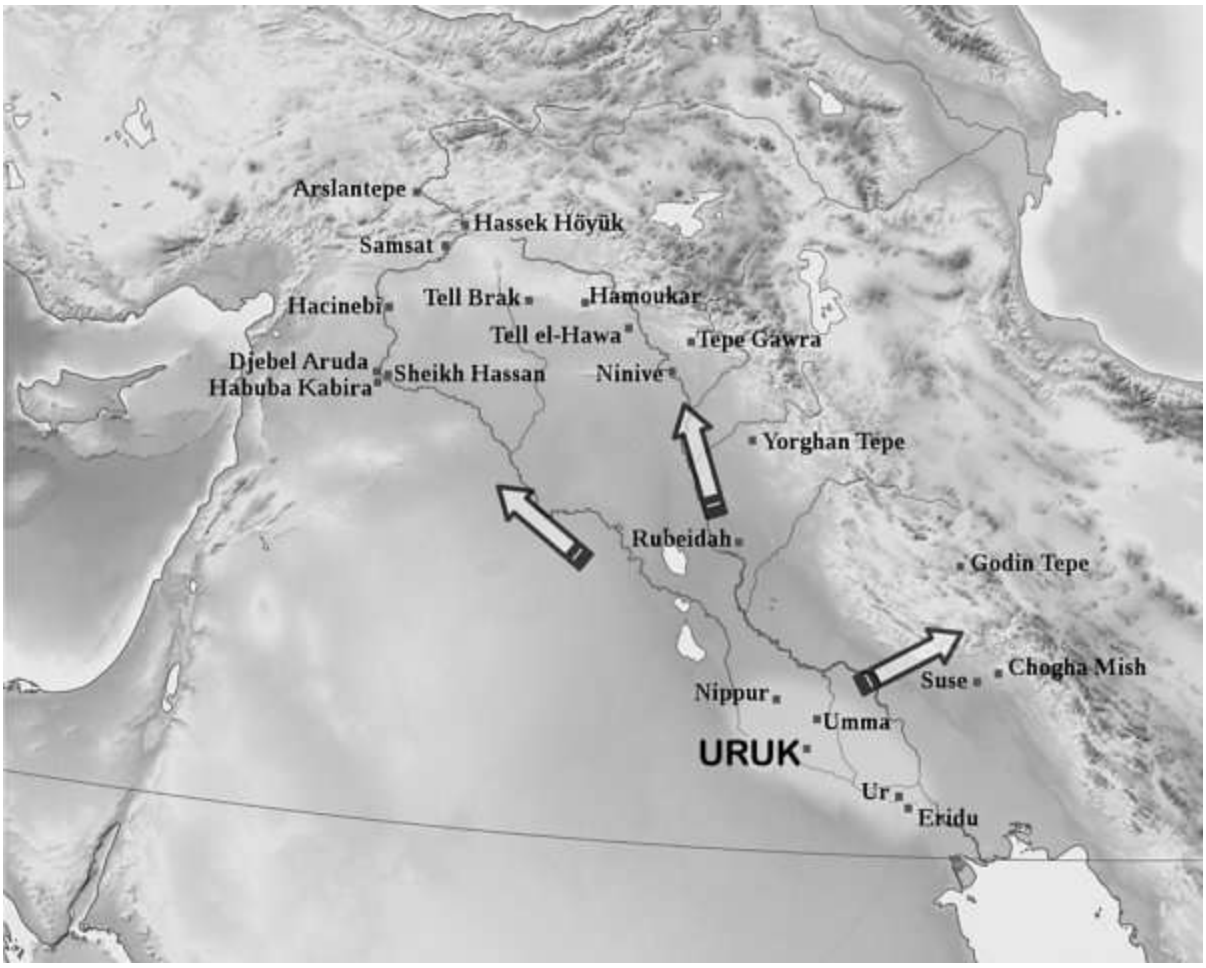
- The first way is to encourage peasants to learn better farming methods so as to increase production. Eventually, that method runs out of steam.
- The second, and far more rapid, way is to attempt to take the wealth of neighboring peasants, thereby risking war with the

ruling elite who manage them.

- The third, and probably most destructive, method is to simply increase the amount you take from those who produce the food and supplies. It’s called taxation.

At every step of the journey “upward” toward civilization, the rich accumulate more and more at the expense of the peasants who produce the food in the first place. That leads to economic instability and, eventually, revolt. The trick is to walk a fine line between how much the upper class can accumulate without provoking revolution from the lower class. No civilization has ever managed to walk that line for very long.

Although Damascus may prove to be the oldest continually occupied city in the world, the oldest city overall is generally considered to be the ancient city of Uruk in Mesopotamia. It was a Euphrates River port city, remembered primarily because it was said to be ruled by a king named Gilgamesh, hero of the oldest written epic poem in human history. In its prime, Uruk boasted a population of some fifty thousand people, probably the largest city ever built up to that time.



The city of Uruk in Mesopotamia expanded its influence greatly in the fourth millenia B.C. thanks to its ideal location and resources. Eventually, many speculate, depletion of resources and greed caused the entire civilization to collapse.

It had temples, which indicated a priestly class. It had palaces, which meant kings. The institution of slavery was well entrenched. Archaeologists have excavated workshops, storehouses, gardens, narrow streets and alleys, inns, and shrines. It was surrounded by a wall of burned bricks and had extensive suburbs.

In *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, it was written that "one third of the whole is city, one third is gardens, and one third is fields, with the precinct of the goddess Ishtar." Some five thousand years ago, the merchants of Uruk invented writing, the newest technology of the time, so the wealthy could track their fast-accumulating riches. We can read the clay tablets today: (so many) cows and bulls, (so many) sheep, (so many) bales of linen, and (so many) slaves.

It must have been a great time and place to live, as long as you were

lucky enough to be a member of the elite class. Historians have traditionally read this as a story of wealth and prosperity, but a closer view reveals inequality, in which an elite class developed networks that carried the resources of the laborers out of the city so as to receive goods and power back into their well-built storehouses. With that wealth, they built ever-more expensive houses and enjoyed ever-more extravagant lifestyles.

It couldn't last, and it didn't. Sometime around 3100 B.C.E., the expansion came to an abrupt halt. The city was burned, the civilization collapsed, the buildings were buried by the dust of time, and an entire civilization disappeared.

No one knows why, really, but indications are that an ever-more demanding corporate structure destabilized the whole social system, the population outstripped its natural resources, the economic infrastructure crumbled, and eventually, the whole enterprise simply collapsed under its own weight, taking both rich and poor with it. Greed and power are a volatile mix. History proves again and again that they are not sustainable.

The question has to be asked: Are we seeing the same deadly brew frothing to the surface in our own civilization?

War

War doesn't inevitably lead to the total destruction of a civilization. Japan and Germany, for instance, lost the Second World War, but their civilization is not "lost." If anything, it is thriving better than ever.

The Plains Indians of the American West managed to find a ceremonial balance between a felt need for war and total annihilation. In their system, counting coup, or touching an enemy in battle, brought far more honor than bringing death and destruction.

To find examples of creating lost civilizations through the act of war, we have to turn to the pages of the Bible. Take these instructions from YHVH (translated as THE LORD or Jehovah), the God of the Israelites, as recorded in Deuteronomy 20:17 of the Bible:

> In the cities of the nations the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, you must not leave alive anything that breathes. You must completely destroy them—the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites—as the

Lord your God has commanded you.

This passage comes from 1 Samuel 15:3:

> Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.

As a matter of fact, it would seem that the god of the Old Testament was not only ruthless toward his supposed enemies, he even turned on his chosen people when they failed to create a civilization in his name. As an example, read this passage from 1 Samuel 15:22, edited a bit for clarity of context:

> The LORD told Samuel, “Saul has stopped obeying me, and I’m sorry that I made him king.”
>
> Samuel was angry, and he cried out in prayer to the LORD all night. Early the next morning he went to talk with Saul, who told him, “I have done what the LORD told me.”
>
> “Then why,” Samuel asked, “do I hear sheep and cattle?”
>
> “The army took them from the Amalekites,” Saul explained. “They kept the best sheep and cattle, so they could sacrifice them to the LORD your God. But we destroyed everything else.”
>
> Samuel continued, “You may not think you’re very important, but the LORD chose you to be king, and you are in charge of the tribes of Israel. When the LORD sent you on this mission, he told you to wipe out those worthless Amalekites. Why didn’t you listen to the LORD? Why did you keep the animals and make him angry?”
>
> “But I did listen to the LORD!” Saul answered. “He sent me on a mission, and I went. I captured King Agag and destroyed his nation. All the animals were going to be destroyed anyway. That’s why the army saved the best of them to be sacrificed.”
>
> Samuel said, “God doesn’t want your sacrifices. He wants you to obey him. You refused to do what God told you, so God has decided that you can’t be king.”

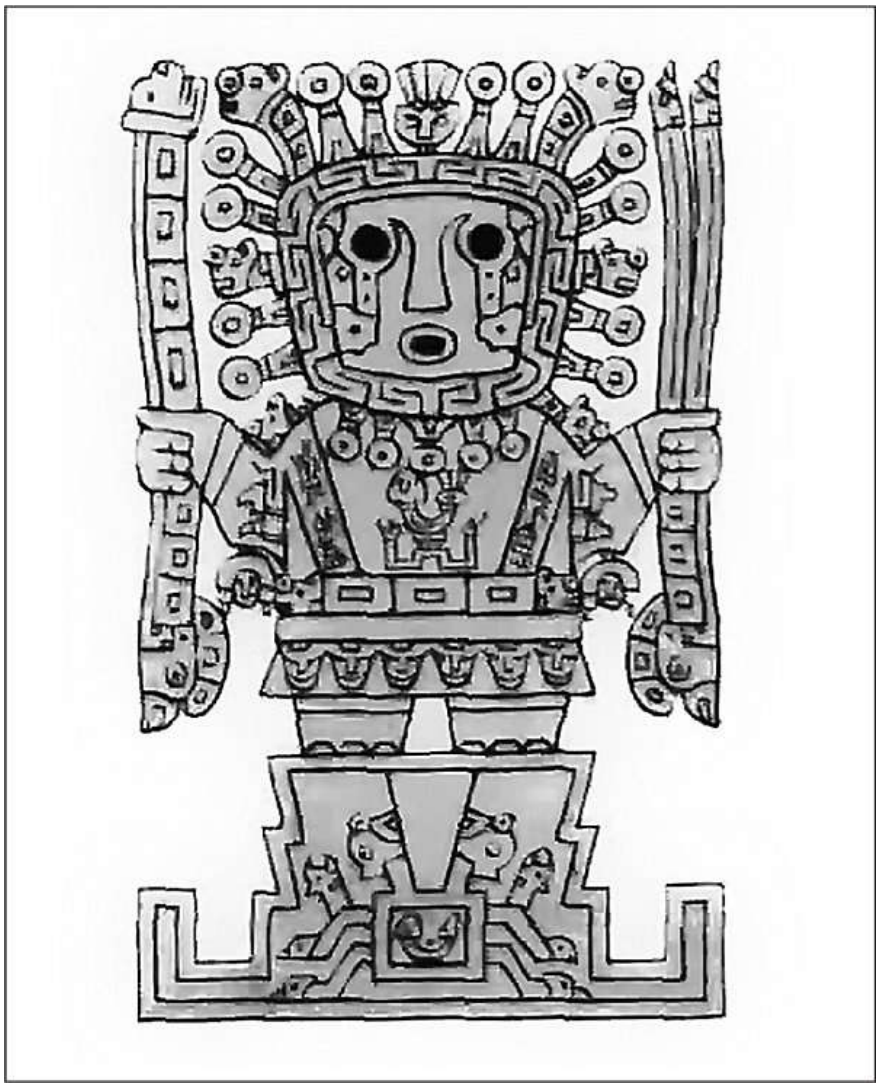
From this, we can deduce that when God tells you to destroy a civilization through war, it behooves you to do it!

All kidding aside, the physical act of war can weaken a civilization, both the aggressors and the victims, but it usually doesn’t completely destroy

them. What most often happens is that the conquerors eliminate the legacy of those they overthrow by destroying their art and history, their records, and their traditions. That's how war creates lost civilizations. It erases their memory.

When the Spanish invaded the lands of the Inca nation in what is now Peru and Bolivia, they found a people with a rich legacy and a vivid memory of the past. Their mythology, later transcribed by Spanish priests whose predecessors had burned all the original documents, spoke of a "white man of large stature and authoritative demeanor." He was old with gray hair, but, in their words, "he spoke to them with love." They recounted that he brought them the blessings of civilization.

Before he appeared, they said, the land was full of chaos, but when he left them to travel across the Pacific—some say he walked on the water, others say he used rafts—he left order and a better life behind. His name, they said, was Viracocha, the "Foam of the Sea." In other versions of the tale, especially the one made famous by Thor Heyerdahl, he was called Kon Tiki.



Viracocha (or Kon Tiki) was the Incan god who created everything in the universe. The god is described as a white man, tall, old, with gray hair and wearing a long, white robe. When Pizarro arrived, the Incas mistook the Spaniard for Viracocha, allowing the conquistador to easily slaughter them all.

The Inca would today be considered even more "lost" than they are were it not for a few Spanish historians astute enough to write those tales down.

A similar story is found in Mexico and Central America. The names Kukulkan, Tikal, Puma Punku, Chichen Itza, Cholula, La Venta, Tres Zapotes, and San Lorenzo roll off the tongue like liquid magic. He who brought civilization to these places was called Quetzalcoatl. He is remembered as *'era hombre blanco,* a large, white man with a flowing beard. Like Viracocha to the west and south, he wore a long, white robe, condemned the sacrifices that spiritually polluted the people, taught them how to use proper cooking fires, and showed them how to "live together as husband and

wife." He arrived from the sea "in a boat that moved without paddles" and "taught the people how to live in peace." When he was eventually rebuffed by a local group who felt threatened by his message, he departed, sailing away "toward the rising Sun."

The final message of both peacekeepers was the same, however: "I'll be back."

It was a promise that led to the downfall of a civilization. The people remembered and waited. Much later, perhaps even thousands of years later, when other white men with flowing beards stepped ashore bringing war instead of civilization, the people, not knowing any better, welcomed them with open arms, thinking the heroes of old had returned.

The war leader who conquered the people of Peru was named Francisco Pizarro. When he discovered, much to his surprise, that his coming was to be celebrated in the Inca capital, he calmly locked the doors and ordered the slaughter of thousands of unarmed, rejoicing people.

In Mexico and Central America, the conquistadores under Hernán Cortés did the same.

As a result of their pillage and destruction in the name of their god, much of the legacy of the Inca and Aztec peoples are now lost to us. What we know we must infer from scanty records, often recorded many years after the fact, strange artifacts, and magnificent architecture that even today baffles our imaginations.

How did they do it? We might never know. The secrets of their civilization are lost. The European conquerors who ventured forth under the Spanish flag and the cross of the Catholic Church have done, to put it mildly, a great disservice to history. Even apart from the death and the destruction they left in their wake, they destroyed centuries, perhaps even millennia, of lost wisdom because a few shortsighted war leaders decided to attribute such wisdom to the forces of evil. Were they really destroying the work of the devil, or were they doing the devil's work? History will be the judge.

When Alexander the Great went forth to capture the world for Greece, he instituted a method of destruction that may not have been as flagrant but proved to be just as effective in terms of creating lost civilizations. Rather than simply capturing slaves, burning, looting, and raping, which occurred anyway, of course, whether he wanted it to or not, he chose to superimpose

Greek culture over the captured civilization. He left in his wake Greek scholars and rulers whose job it was to teach Greek ways to conquered people, making them, in effect, Greek citizens. They were to learn the language and customs, worship methods, and construction techniques of their conquerors. In short, he set out to make the known world a Greek world.

When Alexander the Great went forth to capture the world for Greece, he instituted a method of destruction that may not have been as flagrant but proved to be just as effective in terms of creating lost civilizations.

This superimposing of Greek culture over the existing culture was called Hellenism. It produced a vast, effective empire. When the Romans later took it over, they found it convenient to leave much of the infrastructure in place. The Pax Romana, or peace of Rome, may have been peace brought about by the point of a sword, but it lasted a long time, enabling cultures from around the known world to flourish under Roman auspices.

"All roads led to Rome" in those days. The Christian New Testament, written by Jewish believers in Jesus, who they called "the Prince of Peace," was even written in *Koine* Greek, or "common" Greek, known as Alexandrian dialect, so it was that Roman infrastructure, left over from Greek warfare and protected by imperial soldiers, enabled Christian missionaries to carry word of the new religion to every part of the known world.

It was all made possible through war: truly one of history's great ironies.

What about the forgotten civilizations that even now are being sought by archaeologists who want to know more about who they were? They lie buried beneath the rubble of warlike people who went about the destructive business of creating lost civilizations.

Religion

Like it or not, religion has been part of the human experience from the very beginning. It may have even been the thing that separated us from the rest of the animal kingdom in the first place. Our material and spiritual

natures intertwine like two strands of our DNA helix. As far as we know so far, the very first architecture our species ever built, the Göbekli Tepe complex, is, in fact, a temple.

Two hundred thousand years ago, possibly even earlier, humans had achieved “full anatomical modernity.” If we were to dress them up in modern clothes, we couldn’t distinguish the ancients from us. They possessed the same sized, complex brain that we do, yet for the next 160,000 years, slim archaeological evidence exists that they practiced the kind of symbolic thinking that would lead to religious expression, art, music, and written language.

Symbolic thinking is the phrase anthropologists use to describe an identification of the specific kind of relationship that exists between an image and the object that it represents. It’s a kind of “this means that” expression. It’s at the root of practically everything.

A big company such as Apple or Ford uses a symbolic image to represent its brand. When you see the image, you know immediately who it is that is represented.

Look carefully at the dollar bill you have in your wallet. It’s full of symbols that represent the ideals of the founders of the United States of America.

Every time you see someone wearing a cross or a Star of David, they are announcing, through symbols, “I am Christian” or “I am Jewish.”

Although little evidence of this kind of thinking is in the archaeological record for a long, long time after we arrived at full modernity, forty thousand years ago everything changed. A few artists crawled back into the great, painted caves of western Europe and produced fully developed art. Until recently, no real evidence existed of them practicing or learning how to do this, but according to an article published in the journal *Nature* on September 18, 2018, that may change.

Now it appears that the first example of *Homo sapiens*’ symbolic doodling may have occurred not forty thousand years ago but closer to seventy-three thousand years ago. This one discovery pushes our concept of abstract thought back by about thirty thousand years.

In a South African cave, archaeologists found a stone flake, along with other undoubted *Homo sapiens* artifacts, that featured a nine-line drawing

composed with a red ochre pigment. Red ochre, as far as we know, was first used as long as one hundred thousand years ago, but this is an example of what is so far thought to be the earliest use of it in a symbolic fashion.

These shells found at Blombos Cave had holes drilled into them to create a necklace. As with the example of ochre art from the cave, these beads are also over seventy thousand years old.

The author of the study, Christopher Hinshelwood from the University of Bergen in Norway, said succinctly, "We knew a lot of things *Homo sapiens* could do, but we didn't know they could do drawings back then."

Here is a portion drawn from the introduction of his study:

> Abstract and depictive representations produced by drawing—known from Europe, Africa and Southeast Asia after 40,000 years ago—are a prime indicator of modern cognition and behavior. Here we report a cross-hatched pattern drawn with an ochre crayon on a ground silcrete flake recovered from approximately 73,000-year-

> old Middle Stone Age levels at Blombos Cave, South Africa. Our microscopic and chemical analyses of the pattern confirm that red ochre pigment was intentionally applied to the flake with an ochre crayon. The object comes from a level associated with stone tools of the Still Bay techno-complex that has previously yielded shell beads, cross-hatched engravings on ochre pieces and a variety of innovative technologies. This notable discovery pre-dates the earliest previously known abstract and figurative drawings by at least 30,000 years. This drawing demonstrates the ability of early *Homo sapiens* in southern Africa to produce graphic designs on various media using different techniques.

Think of the time involved! From this first use of pigment deliberately used for drawing abstract symbols until the time of the great murals painted on cave walls in western Europe, almost thirty thousand years passed. It was another forty thousand before Michelangelo painted the murals on display at the Sistine Chapel.

Archaeologists used to think that the cave artists of forty thousand years ago were like musicians who had never taken any lessons but one day produced great music anyway. It seems to have been instinctual. This latest discovery from South Africa now calls that thought into question. A capacity for artistic expression may have slowly evolved rather than suddenly appearing in human consciousness.

However, intervening artistic representation had not yet been discovered, so obviously, somewhere between roughly seventy thousand and forty thousand years ago, something changed. Humans woke up, as it were, to symbolic thought, which would eventually lead to religion, art, and, finally, civilization.

What changed? Why did it change? How did it change? Here are the six current theories.

1. The Monotheistic Explanation

Those who are religious by nature or custom have a simple explanation: God did it. “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and (then) breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and (then) man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7). This three-part Bible verse is familiar to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. It implies that humans were either created or evolved from the animal kingdom, having bodies that were made of the same

“stuff” as “the dust of the ground,” then at some point of our evolution, presumably forty thousand or so years ago, although fundamentalists would place this date closer to ten thousand years ago and archaeologists in South Africa might opt for a date closer to seventy thousand years ago, God infused (“breathed into his nostrils the breath of life”) humanity with consciousness (“a living soul”). The result was Adam and Eve.

For those who believe, this is sufficient explanation. No more is needed. For those who don’t, it isn’t nearly enough.

2. The Evolutionary Explanation

This leads to the next explanation. Humans (including our cousins *Homo neanderthalensis, Homo floresiensis,* and Denisovans) became the first living animals to develop what is now called human consciousness: the ability to picture ourselves as separate and individual personalities and think in symbolic terms. The force behind this process wasn’t divine; it was simply evolution. When we reached a sufficiently evolved state, we developed the capacity to think in symbolic terms. This led to superstition and religion, two ways of trying to categorize and conceptualize human consciousness, but it also led to art, an appreciation of beauty, and the ability to bring the order of civilization out of the chaos of “nature, red in tooth and claw.”

A corollary to this theory is so radical and important that we’re going to treat it in much greater detail in a later chapter called “Neanderthal Ancestors.” It stems from the work of the late Stan Gooch, a British psychologist best known for his hybrid-origin theory of human evolution. In a series of books that spans thirty years, he proposed that our great leap forward some forty thousand years ago stemmed from the fact that Cro-Magnon humans and Neanderthal ancestors crossbred at precisely the same time in history we are now considering.

The art left behind by Cro-Magnons, such as this drawing of lions found in Chauvet Cave, France, shows remarkable creative expression, which is evidence of sophisticated, left-brained thinking.

From our Cro-Magnon ancestors, we inherited our propensity for left-brain thinking that is so prevalent today. To that part of our inheritance, we owe the invention of the materialistic, often violent, patriarchal culture that we associate with modern civilization.

From our matriarchal Neanderthal ancestors, however, we inherited our ability to dream and imagine whole new worlds. In Gooch's 1980 book, *The Double Helix of the Mind*, he put forth the idea that the Neanderthal cerebellum, as is readily seen in thousands of skeletal remains in museums around the world, was much more developed than ours. This is the part of the brain that is responsible for dreaming, for creativity, and, even more importantly, for paranormal and metaphysical experience. These are precisely the kinds of attributes needed for symbolic thinking.

According to Gooch's research, Neanderthals were, if we pay attention to their large eye sockets, much more nocturnal than we are. They were not afraid of the dark, even the dark caves of western Europe. They might have been insightful star gazers and astronomers. Their artifacts include sophisticated musical instruments; thus, they were far more musical than Cro-

Magnons. Music almost universally goes hand in hand with religious practice.

For these reasons, and many more that we will cover in a later chapter, it could very well have been that the *Homo sapiens*' initiation into the world of symbolic thinking and religion came about because we are a hybrid race that inherited two different worldviews, or cosmic perspectives, from diametrically opposed prehuman species that merged to become us.

The Neanderthals, according to Gooch, were the first artists. They were the first shamans. When they mated with Cro-Magnons forty thousand years ago, the first modern, spiritual, religious humans were born.

3. The "Help from Outside" Explanation

This is the theory that evolution itself was not of sufficient strength to bring about the great leap from purely sensory reactions to creative, symbolic thought. Those who hold to this theory believe that our DNA was, at some time in the ancient past, preprogrammed by parties unknown to produce symbolic thinking at a certain stage of our evolution. Critics point out that this explanation just kicks the proverbial can down the road. If "parties unknown" either came to Earth to tinker with our DNA or arranged to seed the galaxy with the gift of consciousness, how did *they* arrive at consciousness in the first place? It's a mystery.

4. The Hallucinogenic Explanation

This is the belief that the ancients discovered hallucinogenic mushrooms and plants that, when combined in the right doses, could break down barriers in the mind produced by evolution that, up to this time, had blinded humans to realities that didn't expressly help them survive in their material environment. Up to this point in human evolution, it would not have been advantageous for a shaman to be mentally engaged with parallel dimensions when a tiger was creeping up on him through the brush. Our senses, quite naturally, hadn't evolved to contemplate such things as a multiverse. They kept us anchored to the here and now. That was a good and practical thing. According to this theory, though, the multiverse was there, whether we could interact with it or not. Eventually, we developed a safe enough existence to allow us to contemplate such things as eternity and infinity. Mushrooms and plant extracts enabled us to bypass senses that had long since atrophied due to neglect and disuse.

5. The Cosmic Ray Explanation

Forty thousand, possibly even seventy thousand, years ago, our planet was bathed in cosmic rays that periodically emanated from a star system near Deneb, which at one time was the North Star. It is now the most prominent star in the constellation Cygnus, which contains the Northern Cross. These cosmic rays produced a startling result on Earth. They either interacted with our DNA itself or produced such a neurological effect that early humans began to notice that greater forces were at play in the cosmos. Looking upward made shamans look inward as well. The result was symbolic, or religious, thought. We became aware of what we now call our spiritual nature and began to express this nature on the walls of the great, painted caves.

6. The “Give Me the Beat, Boys” Explanation

This is a variation of the hallucinogenic explanation. At some point in our history, humans discovered that drumming and music could produce and affect trancelike states that opened the mind to parallel dimensions normally filtered out by the five physical senses.

However it happened, based on the archaeological record, we can say with some degree of confidence that things changed for us between seventy thousand and forty thousand years ago. We didn’t produce civilization in and of itself right away, but we developed the capacity for it. This capacity was first expressed on the cave walls of western Europe. If that’s the case, we can theorize that when that capacity is undermined and destroyed, the civilization that formed around it will be destroyed as well.

Chiricahua Apaches Four Months After Arriving at Carlisle
Hugh Chee. Fred'k. Eskelsejah. Clement Scanilzay. Samson Noran.
Ernest Hogee. Margaret Y.Nadasthilah.
Humphrey Escharzay. Beatrice Kiahtel. Janette Pahgostatum. Bishop Eatennah. Basil Ekarden.

Indigenous peoples were assimilated into white American society through a combination of cultural destruction (religion, language, way of life) and forced education in white schools such as the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, which ran from 1879 to 1918.

When Julius Caesar, for instance, wanted to conquer the people of Gaul, he destroyed the pagan civilization of that area by stabbing it in its spiritual heart. The civilization was built around the religion of the Druids. To overthrow it, he cut down the sacred groves where the Druids conducted their religious rituals. The death of the religion soon led to the death of the civilization. We know very little about Druids today. Their entire way of life was obliterated. When that happened, their civilization became lost to time.

It's a familiar pattern that was repeated again and again down through history. The Spanish used it to defeat the Aztec and Inca peoples. Europeans used it to defeat the indigenous tribes of North America. When they eliminated the buffalo from the Great Plains, for instance, they essentially destroyed the religion of the Sioux and Cheyenne. Their whole culture was based on the buffalo, which was the principal animal of their religious mythology. The destruction of the buffalo herds was essentially a heretical act.

It's a very simple, if tragic, formula. Destroy a people's religion, and

you destroy their civilization.

Assimilation

By far, the easiest and probably most common way to lose a civilization is simply to assimilate it. Move in, marry the natives, produce children who don't remember the old ways, and within three generations, the civilization has changed enough that you have to look very hard to find it.

This is such a common practice that it seems to be the principal fear behind cultures such as that of the Jews, who have built into their religious texts admonitions against marrying outside the culture.

I once had a very good Jewish friend who went to the extreme of moving to Israel when his daughter began seriously dating a Gentile boyfriend. He was a progressive and liberal thinker, and before he left, I asked why he was so worried when the boy in question was a very fine and industrious young man.

"Jim," he told me, "he's a wonderful man. But you have to understand that everything my people have fought for and endured could be lost in one generation if we aren't careful."

It may not be a point of view I was able to fully share, but I could at least respect it. I never saw him again.

Climate Change

Throughout history have been times when the weather itself produced the conditions that led to what we have called a lost civilization.

Consider the following historical anecdote:

Eventually, though, a few far-seeing people in power began to notice something troubling. Each year, the crops yielded a little less than the year before. The earth seemed a touch more barren.

Not so long ago, at least as archaeologists measure such things, a group of immigrants moved into a vast and varied land that seemed to offer great potential. They settled down and began to find ways to exploit the abundant

resources surrounding them. They invented brand-new methods of dry-land farming and soon began to grow more food than they could ever eat, so they pioneered a vast trading infrastructure that covered thousands of miles. It wasn't long before yesterday's luxuries became today's necessities. Soon, a housing boom developed, providing jobs for all in a burgeoning market. They built multistory condominiums, many of which featured wonderful views and open-air vistas. Specialized labor freed up people to explore their personal gifts and abilities. Religion flourished, and a centralized class of priests developed new insights and traditions. It seemed as though a never-ending string of tomorrows would stretch out into a future that looked better and better in every way. This was high civilization!

Eventually, though, a few far-seeing people in power began to notice something troubling. Each year, the crops yielded a little less than the year before. The earth seemed a touch more barren. Their warnings fell on deaf ears, of course. People involved in urban planning depend on growth going on forever. Priests need to assure their congregations that they have everything under control and that God is looking after his "chosen people."

A poor harvest was always excused. "It didn't rain enough last year, that's all. These things go in cycles. Don't worry. Wait 'til next year! Things will soon be back to normal. It's always been like this!"

However, the day came, inevitably, when the use of natural resources reached a tipping point. Fuel was harder to come by. Each year seemed to set new records for warmth. Weather patterns changed. Instead of helpful rain came storms and floods. The rivers seemed to be either too high or to disappear altogether. Old-timers were heard to say that it wasn't like this when they were younger, but they were ignored, of course. What did they know? Oldtimers are always complaining!

The social planners assured the people that they could make up their deficits by extending trade with foreign countries, but prices—controlled, as always, by supply and demand—continued to rise. The standard of living began to drop. Young people left home to look elsewhere for a better future and a place to make a living. The crime rate rose as people who had little looked with envy upon people who had an abundance. The "haves" began to look askance at the "have-nots" and began to demand protection from the lower classes. A type of police state developed as class warfare threatened to destroy the culture.

As always, in times of confusion such as these, people turned to fundamentalist religion. They wanted to get back to the good old days. The priests responded the way priests always respond. The people had forsaken old-time religion. What did they expect? Of course, God was punishing them, but God would heal their land if they just got back to practicing traditional values. The young people were out of hand! Discipline! Order! Time-tested wisdom! That was what they needed.

Oh, and they needed to donate more money to the priests in order to build new, improved places of worship that would pacify the gods.

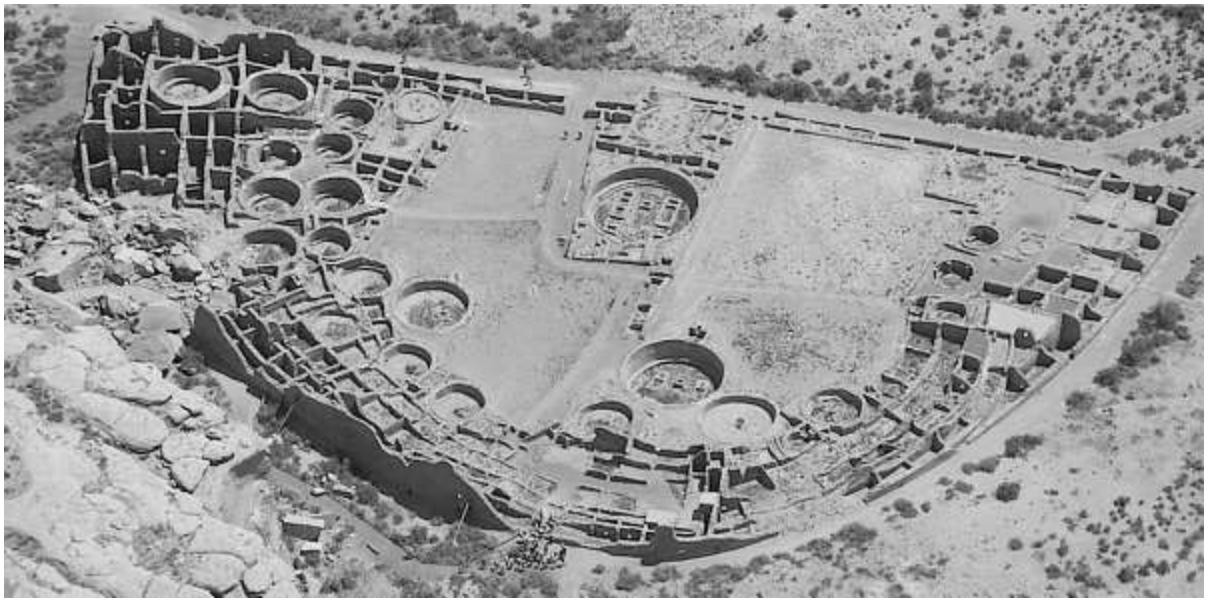
It didn't take long for the crisis to reach epidemic proportions. Resources dwindled exponentially. Those in power were starting to feel the pinch, so God spoke to the politicians and priests, ordering them to go to war with those who had more resources, especially fuel and expensive items now considered essential. The only place to get such things was from foreign countries, so war was justified.

Of course, as in all wars, the ones who ordered the charge stayed home. The young, the poor, and the innocent were the ones who died.

When the dust finally settled, a good and once prosperous civilization had disappeared from Earth. They all moved away, died in battle, died from disease, or died in the poverty of old age with no one to help out.

This may sound like a modern tale, but it all took place a thousand years ago in the Four Corners area where Arizona, Colorado, Utah, and New Mexico come together. We don't know what the people called themselves. In the nineteenth century, we called them "cliff dwellers." In the twentieth century, we began to call them "Anasazi," a Navajo word meaning "enemy ancestors." The Hopi and Zuni people of Arizona and New Mexico believe themselves to be the descendants of these people, so today, we call them "Ancestral Puebloans," but they were an industrious people who built for the future. Their multifloored cliff dwellings still stand today. At the height of their culture, more people were living in southwestern Colorado than live there today. By the end of the thirteenth century, Chaco Canyon was the largest city in America. It featured a structure that held the honor of being the largest building in North America—containing some six hundred rooms—until it was finally surpassed by a hotel in New York City in 1882. People traded with California, Peru, the Mississippi River valley, and Minnesota. They built four- and five-story buildings and far surpassed the level of

astronomy held by many people today.



Pueblo Bonito is the most studied of the pueblos in Chaco Canyon. Covering about 2 acres (0.8 hectares), it is also one of the largest ruins of a once-thriving, thirteenth-century civilization that may have been a victim of climate change.

By the fifteenth century, though, they were gone, leaving only ghostly, empty megastructures and mystery.

To this day, no one is really sure why. Many ideas and theories exist, but we really don't know what happened. It was probably due to many causes that came together to provide a perfect storm. A drought certainly would have made it impossible to practice dry-land farming. Every tree for miles around was harvested to fuel the endless fires needed for cooking and firing pottery. Tree-ring analysis seems to indicate that the people simply used up their resources, exploiting their environment beyond what it could produce. As much as people hate to admit it, Earth is not forever. It never was. It never will be. Wisdom demands seeing what is plain for all to see, but "all" don't want to see it.

The process that brought about Anasazi Armageddon probably followed a familiar track. It began with population explosion. Too many people on the land led to planting more and more crops. Crops need water. Soon, the water was in short supply. Agriculture failed them. That led to warfare and genocide. Some evidence even exists of ritualistic cannibalism. Apparently, the priests foisted a religious terrorism to keep folks in line. Eventually, the people simply walked away.

It all began with climate change.

On a hot summer day some years ago, my wife, Barbara, and I were living in Arizona, researching and writing a book called *Armageddon Now: The End of the World A–Z.* We had interviewed Hopi elders and clambered up and down a lot of Ancestral Puebloan ruins searching for the reason behind the "Anasazi Armageddon," and one day we found ourselves on a mesa top, standing on the half-finished walls of what was thought to be an ancient temple—a "megachurch," if you will. Work on the edifice had begun at the very end of the mysterious people's time in that region. The people had simply stopped working. The walls were left unfinished. No one knew why. No guide book or expert we could find had an answer. What had happened here some seven hundred years ago?

They probably just looked at each other, nodded their heads, put down their tools, and said, "This is no fun. We're going home," and they left. The ruling class had no one left to rule.

Without any corroborating evidence, we had a theory. It seemed to us as though the builders, tired, discouraged, and desperate for food in the sweltering, dry heat of Arizona, had simply heard one too many commands issued by the priestly elite who had ordered this building. They probably just looked at each other, nodded their heads, put down their tools, and said, "This is no fun. We're going home," and they left. The ruling class had no one left to rule. They probably couldn't understand how, in one moment of time, a hierarchical civilization could simply cease to exist. It had seemed so real, so permanent, so much a part of life that they couldn't imagine anything else, but now, it was finished. No one was left to boss around. Just like that, it was over.

What Evidence Do They Leave Behind?

Undoubtedly, in the long history of our planet, some lost civilizations will remain lost forever. Time has buried any evidence that they ever existed. Sometimes, jungles and forests have swept them up, crumbling their once proud monuments and reducing them to piles of rubble that decay and return

to dust. Sometimes, ocean waters have swept in and hidden from the eyes of explorers any evidence of what were once the thriving roads and centers of trade for a forgotten metropolis.

However, other civilizations have left behind tantalizing clues. Those clues whisper to us. “I was here,” they say. “My people lived and breathed just like you. They had hopes and dreams. They loved and lost and reached further than they could grasp. They expected to survive forever. They deserve a proper memorial. They knew things that could benefit humankind today.”

At the very least, they deserve to be remembered. Civilizations consist of people who were no different, in all the important ways, than any of us.

Sometimes, lost civilizations left behind evidence in stone. Megalithic structures around the world speak a silent message to all who pause, stop for a moment, and listen with their inner ears and imaginations. Stonehenge, Machu Picchu, Chaco Canyon, and Göbekli Tepe draw many visitors every year, in most cases more people than ever lived in them during their prime.

At other times, they left evidence in stories that just won’t die. The Atlantis legend was recounted only in a few scant paragraphs by a Greek writer who lived almost 2,500 years ago, but it has since generated more books than any current civilization of the modern era. Myths are powerful memories. People might not recall the difference between Mesopotamia and Babylon, but everyone knows about Eden, and even in this scientific and critical age, people are engaged in the pursuit of finding its original location.

This is the kind of evidence we need to pursue—evidence in stone and evidence in story. Within the pages of this book, we probably won’t “find” any lost civilizations in the sense of unlocking all of its secrets and riddles, but that’s not the point. The importance of a lost civilization lies more in the questions it raises than in the evidence it provides. Who were these people? What were their dreams and hopes? Where did they settle down to build? Why did they seek to leave a mark on history?

Those are the questions. Let’s seek some answers!

PART II: EVIDENCE IN STONE

We are not the first people to build in stone, and we will not be the last.

—John Martineau, *Megaliths*

Turning Over Rocks

When it comes to finding lost civilizations, the trick is in knowing where to look. We could start anywhere around the globe. Evidence is found everywhere, on every continent, and in almost every country on earth, but it helps to have a sense of continuity, so we'll start with Göbekli Tepe, thought to be the earliest significant structure built by our remote ancestors, the place where it now appears our particular civilization began, and the center from which the ancients began the great experiment known as the Neolithic Agricultural Revolution that eventually led to the world we know today.

Even this starting point has its disadvantages, though. Twenty years ago, no one had ever heard of Göbekli Tepe. Ten years ago, no one quite believed that it had been dated correctly, because, as we shall soon see, it broke all the rules.

Now although the dating is universally accepted and the site is considered to be the earliest Neolithic construction site in the world, we will soon explore sites that might be even older. Since Göbekli Tepe was built right at the end of the last Ice Age, if older sites are confirmed, they will prove that *a* human civilization, if not *our* human civilization, existed long before our history books are ready to admit.

We are living at a time during which the human story we have been taught is beginning to display some missing chapters. New evidence of antiquity seems to appear almost every month. It's an exciting time. It's a controversial time. It's an intriguing time. Because our study has to begin somewhere, we'll start at the earliest universally accepted place and time and then follow the spread of civilization outward. We'll have to jump around a little because human history doesn't progress down a straight and narrow path or arrow of time, but if we begin at what most people believe to be the beginning, at least it will serve as a jumping-off point into the fascinating history of the human race.

The time is 11,600 years ago, right at the end of the Younger Dryas Ice Age. The place is Anatolia, the westernmost outpost of Asia. The people are unknown hunter–gatherers who roll out of bed one morning and, right out of the blue, decide to build a temple that will last forever.

ANATOLIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Göbekli Tepe: A Time Capsule for Our Era

In 1995, a German archaeologist named Klaus Schmidt decided to begin work in Turkey at a place called Potbelly Hill, or Göbekli Tepe. He didn't know at the time that he was about to turn the world of archaeology upside down and rewrite the story of our civilization. When it became apparent that he was on to something completely transforming, he declared, "In 10 or 15 years, Göbekli Tepe will be more famous than Stonehenge. And for good reason!"

He was right.

What he found was a huge temple complex built of immense, T-shaped stone pillars arranged in sets of rings. The tallest are eighteen feet high and weigh sixteen tons. Carved into their surfaces are a whole menagerie of bas-relief totemic animals of prey. Littering the nearby hillside are thousands of flint tools from Neolithic times—knives, projectile points, choppers, scrapers, and files.

When Schmidt used standard, accepted methods to date the site, he amazed even himself. Göbekli Tepe was built seven thousand years before the Great Pyramid of Giza, many thousands of years before even the first wooden beginnings of Stonehenge, and, it was then thought, way before the invention of agriculture. How could a workforce consisting of the thousands of laborers needed to construct such a project possibly be mobilized, instructed, equipped, fed, and encouraged to stay on the job when the only people thought to have lived back then were Stone Age primitives?

So far, no indication whatsoever exists of extensive agriculture going on in the surrounding area until after construction began. At least at first, evidence suggests, hunting teams would fan out, kill what game they could, and bring it back to the workers. The bones of their evening meals consist mostly of auks and gazelles. Then, later in the project, it appears that the birth of agriculture started here in Turkey rather than down south at Sumer many thousands of years later when traditional history claimed it did, and with the first harvest of domesticated grain, not only do we witness the birth of agriculture, it seems as though the birth of the alcohol industry began as well because at least part of that harvest was set aside for the first batch of beer

that humankind had yet tasted. One can only imagine a distant artisan ancestor putting down his hammer and chisel at the end of a long day and declaring, “Now it’s Miller time!”

Göbekli Tepe, a temple located in what is currently southeastern Turkey, is an astounding 12,000 years old—about 7,500 years older than the Great Pyramids of Egypt.

This isn’t such a far-fetched idea. The Bible tells us that after Noah’s Ark had landed at Mount Ararat, not far from Göbekli Tepe, the first thing the old sailor did was to plant a vineyard, make some wine, and get drunk (Genesis 9:20–21). Workers who built the Egyptian Pyramids were paid in rations of beer. It would seem that those who first told the old stories about the construction of holy places believed that alcohol, also called, interestingly enough, *spirits*, and the human race go way back together.

How did a hunter–gatherer culture supply the manpower to carve and move sixteen-ton rocks? What motivated them? Religious temples supposedly didn’t come into play until generations after the Agricultural Revolution, but here was a huge temple found springing up from the landscape thousands of years before cultural religion was thought to have been organized enough to even attempt such a thing!

As far as anyone knew when Göbekli Tepe was discovered, it was by far the largest building project ever attempted by humankind up to that point in history, but even more amazing is the fact that no precursors seem to exist. Just as fully developed cave art seems to have arrived full-blown with no lead-up, in the case of megalithic architecture, no trial and error, no history of evolving concepts, and no evidence of any practice sites exist, and to further add to the mystery, the most sophisticated construction seems to have happened first, at the bottom of the dig. It appears that later generations built on top of it, but their work exhibits less and less skill with each succeeding layer. Göbekli Tepe thus illustrates the *unraveling* of a tradition rather than the *building* of one. Then, to add yet a final mystery, after only a few generations went by, the whole site was deliberately backfilled, completely and deliberately buried like a time capsule, preserving it intact so that it could be dug up and studied in 1995.

The site is still 90 percent unexamined. Klaus Schmidt passed away before the work had hardly begun, but a lot more is about to be revealed in the coming years.

What was the motivating force that made our ancient ancestors decide to construct this amazing temple? We don’t know for sure, of course, but all early indications point to religious beliefs. This is a sacred site.

Charles C. Mann, writing for *National Geographic* magazine in June 2011, called the Göbekli Tepe temple site “the birth of religion.” So many carved shamanic totem animals have been found that it appears he was entirely correct, but so far, no contemporary nearby towns or support villages have been found. It seems obvious that this temple was a religious site that people journeyed to reach. As such, it must represent something so big, so meaningful, so incredibly important in their lives that they felt moved to construct a monument to it. We might never know exactly what it was, but it meant a great deal to them. Their faith either inspired them or caused them to fear their god in a huge way.

Whatever the content of that faith, the animal envoys carved in such detail probably mean that it had something to do with the religion we now call animism. This is the belief that spirit “animates” everything in nature. Animals, trees, rocks, landscape, and humans are all in Mother Earth’s protective embrace.

The alignments of the stones themselves make it appear just as obvious

that astronomy figured into the picture. The very structure of Göbekli Tepe seems to bring the heavens down to earth. The many site lines that zero in on certain stars, planets, and the Moon cannot be coincidental.

Göbekli Tepe isn't an easy place to get to. The builders were motivated by what they saw and felt on the landscape, not by where they found it convenient to work. No water source is nearby. No towns, villages, or fields existed because these hadn't been developed yet.

No, they built where they did because they felt called to a particular spot of ground in order to manifest a very powerful religion that ties an earthly landscape securely to a heavenly perspective.

From the very beginning, one question has been at the center of this discovery. How did a primitive, hunter–gatherer society suddenly learn to build this way and express their religion in such a manner? Could they suddenly have learned such things on their own, or were they taught?

The answer might lie in the accepted date of Göbekli Tepe's construction. It appears to have been built in the years immediately following the Younger Dryas Ice Age epoch. This era ended suddenly with what might very well have been catastrophic results. Studies of ice cores taken from Greenland glaciers indicate that 11,600 years ago, the meltdown caused by a sudden warming of the planet would have caused worldwide floods on every coast of every continent in the world. Sea levels would have risen almost overnight.

Suspiciously, Göbekli Tepe is situated very close to the place where one legend has it that such a flood deposited Noah and his family on Mount Ararat. Might some truth exist to this long-discredited myth that today is commonly viewed through theological rather than historical lenses?

As you can see from this map, Göbekli Tepe is not far from Mount Ararat, the place where many believe Noah's Ark is located. The two may be linked by evidence of when the Great Flood could have occurred during a period of global warming about 11,600 years ago.

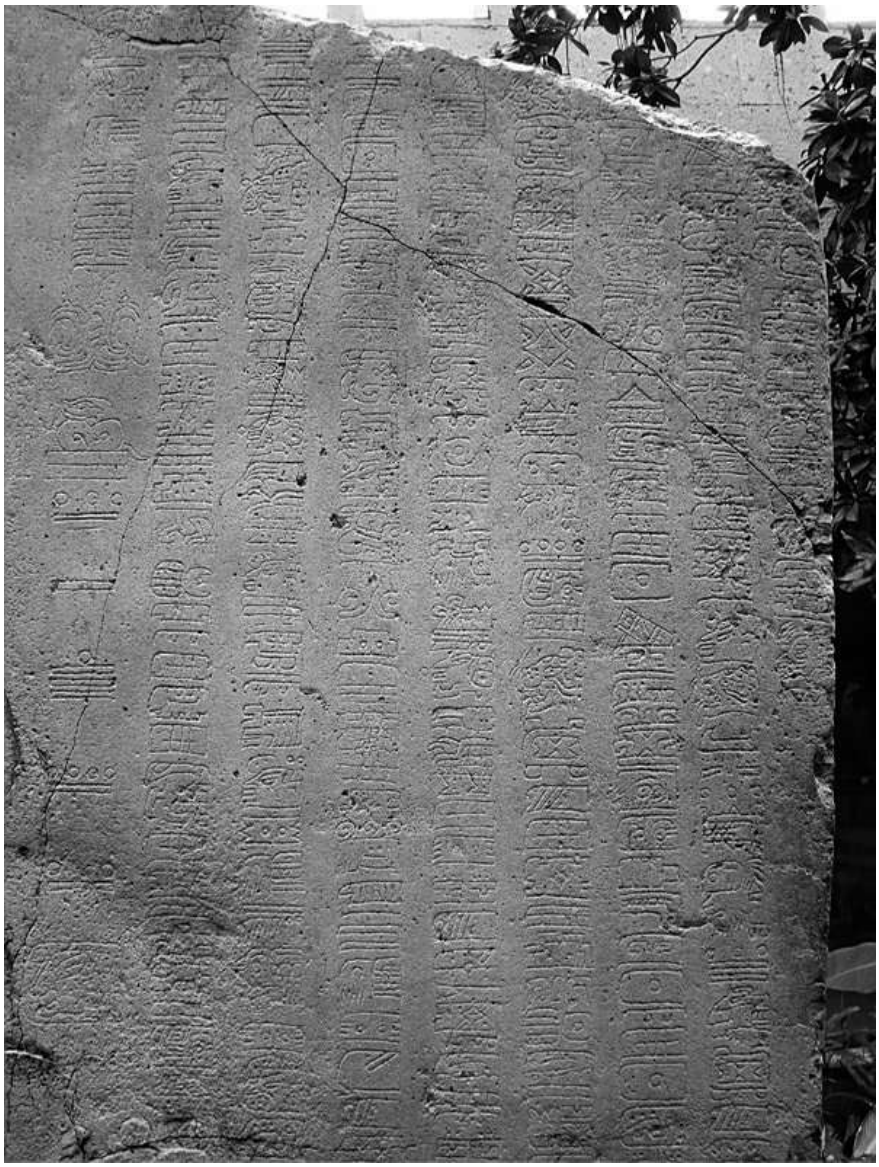
The patriarch Abraham, father to the three great, monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, was said to have been born in a town called Ur, later Urfa, and now called Sanliurfa, just a short walk from Göbekli Tepe.

Legend lives on in this site. Does a kernel of history exist beneath all the mythology? Did something special happen here at the beginning of our civilization—something remembered in religious mythology and oral history? Does the story carry an important message we would do well to heed?

In his best-selling books *Fingerprints of the Gods* and *Magicians of the Gods* Graham Hancock puts forth a compelling argument that whatever civilization arose at Göbekli Tepe, it was not the first. According to his theory, the ancient builders didn't *develop* their construction techniques. They *inherited* them.

Could it be that sophisticated builders from a lost Ice Age civilization that thrived during the Younger Dryas, being experienced and well versed in megalithic construction techniques, traveled from their destroyed, sea-level cities to the mountainous Anatolian landscape after having experienced a heavenly event such as a comet impact that brought to a sudden end their civilization and rained devastating havoc down on Earth? Were they then moved to inspire a religion that "married" heaven and Earth into one theological construct? If so, Göbekli Tepe might very well be the first temple of that new religion, designed by emissaries from a forgotten Ice Age civilization, who sought to teach the Neolithic survivors of the cataclysm to remember that what happened once could happen again.

Babylonian religious texts such as the *Enuma Elish,* written in a region just a little south of Göbekli Tepe, speak of ancient gods called Anunnaki, who suddenly appeared on the scene at this time of history to organize, some say mate with or even genetically manipulate, the ancestors of this very people. In Genesis 6:2, the Bible makes a pointed reference to the fact that "the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose." This puzzling story is set in this very geographical location and speaks as if it were relating historical fact rather than religious mythology. The products of these sexual unions resulted in a mysterious race called the Nephilim, "heroes of old, men of renown" (Genesis 6:4). It is one of the most intriguing passages of the Bible: "There were giants in the earth in those days." What does it mean?



Dating to the second century C.E., this column from the La Mojarra Stela contains glyphs of the Epi-Olmec culture that describe events and dates from the Long Count calendar.

Many interpretations exist, but the truth is, no one knows.

Göbekli Tepe might have something even more important to teach us. This lesson is one we will return to when we look at the Maya calendar, the Egyptian complex at Giza, the myth of Atlantis, and perhaps a few more important places scattered around the globe. It has to do with the future of humankind on the planet.

Let’s begin with a brief look at the Mayan calendar. In December 2012, many people were interested in what is called the Maya Long Count calendar. Many people mistakenly believed it to be a prediction that the world was

going to end on December 21 that year because the calendar appeared to end on that date. Obviously, they were mistaken, but that calendar, like all calendars, didn't signify an "end" as much as a new beginning. Calendars, even the ones we use today, have to end somewhere, but they always imply that the next January 1 brings with it a new year, a new beginning.

The Maya Long Count calendar was no different. It marked the end of the twenty-six-thousand-year circle of precession that marks the time between the conjunction of the Winter Solstice sunrise with the center of the flat plain of the Milky Way galaxy as it appears on Earth. In our time, on December 21, 2012, the solstice took place and appeared exactly the same in the sky as it did to our twenty-six-thousand-year-old ancestors.

However, precession is much too imprecise to narrow such an event down to one day. Indeed, the best we can do is to estimate a period that lasts for some eighty years, so we might as well just say that the Winter Solstice Sun is rising in conjunction with the visible plain of the Milky Way now, just as it has since 1960 and as it will continue to do until 2040. The Maya calendar was well within that time frame but doesn't pinpoint an exact day.

What does this have to do with Göbekli Tepe? Just this.

In Graham Hancock's *Magicians of the Gods*, he describes the jolt he felt while reading a paper presented by Paul Burley in June 2011 called "Göbekli Tepe: Temples Communicating an Ancient Cosmic Geography." On Pillar 43 at Göbekli Tepe, the builders carved an exact relief of what the sky would look like at the time of the Winter Solstice during our time of history, the same time that marked the end of the Maya Long Count calendar.

In Burley's words:

> What's important here is that for some unknown reason the builders of Göbekli Tepe constructed a temple apparently highlighting a time 11,600 years in their future. Yet this time is intentional. The symbolism is clear and in keeping with many mythologies describing this very same event occurring at the very same time we live in today!

This raises some interesting questions:

- Was a comet, probably embedded in the Taurid Meteor Stream, responsible for the Younger Dryas impact?
- Did it destroy a lost civilization capable of great feats of

astronomy?

- Were the survivors capable of realizing that it would happen again? Could they figure out when?
- Did they encode this message that would someday be recovered by a civilization that would exist when the comet would return? Did they do all this at Göbekli Tepe and then bury the whole site so it would become, for all practical purposes, a time capsule?
- Was this the same message embedded in the Maya Long Count calendar and in myths from around the world?
- Are we on schedule for the same day of reckoning experienced by those who helped our Neolithic ancestors begin our civilization? Has the day arrived when we, too, might have to contemplate becoming another in what might be a long line of lost civilizations?

Professor Emilio Spedicato of the University of Bergamo believes he has discovered evidence of an object embedded in the heart of the Taurid Meteor Stream that might be as large as thirty kilometers in diameter, again referenced by Graham Hancock in *Magicians of the Gods*:

> It is predicted that in the near future (around the year 2030) the earth will cross again that part of the torus [the debris stream] that contains the fragments, an encounter that in the past has dramatically affected mankind.

Have we in fact discovered, with the aid of our advanced scientific instruments, what the ancients were warning us about when they built Göbekli Tepe, encoded a warning for the future, and then buried their work so it would serve as a "message in a bottle" meant for a future generation?

Far more riddles are yet to be uncovered at Göbekli Tepe. The work there has just begun, but if an enlightened, technological group of engineers/astronomers survived the cataclysmic Younger Dryas epoch, inspired and instructed what they recognized as a new, emerging culture, and cleared the way for the beginning of what we now call "our" civilization, this may very well have been one of the places where they first began their work. Their civilization is now lost to us, but if they were there at what we call "the beginning," we have to ask if they might also have warned us about "the end."

Baalbek of Lebanon: The Mystery of the Canaanites

Of all the seafaring civilizations who, to our knowledge, first explored the vast oceans, none are more mysterious than the Phoenicians. How far did their voyages take them? What lands did they discover and explore? How did they navigate? What forgotten influence did they have upon the history of the world?

In the early texts of the Bible, they are called Canaanites, although a subtle difference exists between the two terms. Phoenicia generally refers to what we now call Lebanon. Canaan is a broader term that included Israel, Syria, and Jordan, but they were all Semitic peoples and helped make us who we are today because it was their written language that was the basis for first the Greek and then the Roman alphabet from which we derive the English language.

It must have been quite a sight to see their great ships, decked out with carved images of horses' heads in honor of Yamm, their god of the sea, heave into view, bringing the promise of trade from exotic lands. Especially prized were purple robes from Tyre, used initially by Mesopotamian royalty and later by Roman aristocrats. Tyre and its sister city, Sidon, were famous for their exports and trade systems, while Byblos, which was to gain fame as a central part of the Egyptian myth of Osiris, and Baalbek, named after the god Baal, who was later so despised by the Hebrew prophets, were the most important religious centers of the Canaanite civilization.

A strange story, notably skipped over by many preachers who understandably don't want to read it aloud from their pulpits to a spruced-up Sunday morning congregation, is told in Genesis 9:20–27.

Canaan, the man who is the presumed founder of the Canaanites, was reportedly the son of Ham and the grandson of the patriarch Noah, himself a sailor of no small reputation. The Bible says that Canaan inherited a curse, however, not a blessing. A strange story, notably skipped over by many preachers who understandably don't want to read it aloud from their pulpits to a spruced-up Sunday morning congregation, is told in Genesis 9:20–27.

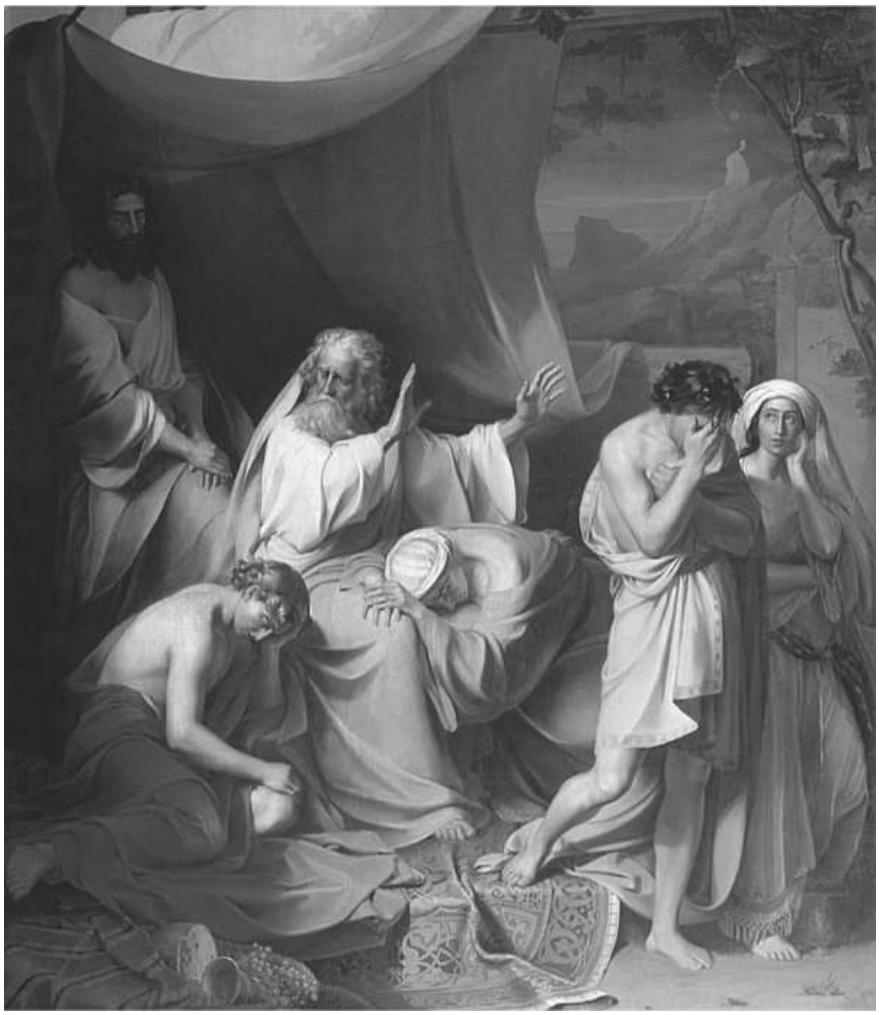
After the floodwaters had retreated, we read, Noah planted a vineyard, made some wine, and proceeded to get drunk. He fell asleep naked in his tent.

Now comes the embarrassing part. Let's hear it straight from the Bible itself, with no middle man to interpret it:

> Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's naked body. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father naked.
>
> When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, he said, "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers."

Is it any wonder that preachers like to avoid stories like this? Leaving aside the whole inebriated Noah situation, what had Ham, the father of Canaan, done to his naked father? The act remains a mystery, but why was his son Canaan cursed and not Ham?

This was a popular justification for slavery in the antebellum South. Verse 27 reads, "May Canaan be the slave of Japheth." Ham, southern preachers claimed, was black. The Bible never claims an African wife for Abraham, so how this could have happened was never made clear, but that was the claim nonetheless, so his descendants were forever cursed to serve their "brother," the white Japheth.



A nineteenth-century painting by Ivan Stepanovitch Ksenofontov depicts Noah cursing his son Ham. The descendants of Ham's son Canaan would forever more be cursed to be servants and slaves. Historically, this biblical tale has been used to justify slavery of people such as African Americans.

According to Robert Johnson Bowie Jr. in his book *Genesis Characters and Events in Ancient Greek Art,* this story gets even more interesting. When Noah was told to board the Ark prior to the Flood, his family joined the cruise as well. His son Ham was married to a "Cainite," or Canaanite woman, named Naamah, the daughter of Lamach, who we will meet up with later when we look at the journeys of Enoch. If the ages given to the biblical patriarchs are to be taken seriously and the story is read historically rather than metaphorically, people lived a lot longer before the Flood. Thus, Naamah was thought to have brought with her both a genetic disposition for long life and anger toward the god who had destroyed the people of her birth family. Was she the one who influenced her husband's attitudes toward his

god-fearing father? Did the daughter-in-law inspire whatever the act was that brought about Noah's anger?

Now it gets even more intriguing. Through the study of linguistics, some scholars believe that Naamah went on to fame and glory, remembered by her descendants under names such as Astarte, Ishtar, Artemis, Asherah, and perhaps Isis, eventually emerging as the goddess Athena. The Greeks later built an altar to her, lauding the way she brought back the pre-Flood religion of Cain who, according to their religious beliefs, was enlightened by the serpent from Eden.

Is it any wonder, then, that this was one of the reasons theologians give for Jehovah, the god of the Israelites, to later order the destruction of the Canaanites when the Israelites were about to enter Canaan following their exile in Egypt?

If the Bible is considered to be historically accurate, it's probably a lucky thing that the Jews never completely followed directions. They let some Canaanites live, which proved handy when Solomon wanted to build the great Temple in Jerusalem. His chief architect and head builder was none other than Hiram of Tyre, a Canaanite city famous for its "Cedars of Lebanon."

According to legend, Hiram went on to fame as a principal founder of Freemasonry, who provided not only the building secrets that enabled the construction of monumental feats of architecture but the very blueprint for Masonic lodge rooms around the world even today, including the twin pillars of Jachin and Boaz, the royal arch, and the many secrets of the higher degrees of Masonry.

Even before the time of Solomon, however, the Canaanites had established their reputation as seafarers. During the time of the pharaohs, they dominated the Levant, an area that includes modern-day Lebanon, Jordan, and much of Syria. Given the fact that geography hemmed them into a narrow strip along the coast of the Mediterranean, they were forced to turn to the sea and eventually controlled most of the Mediterranean.

According to modern DNA testing reported by the *American Journal of Human Genetics*, not only were their principal cities not destroyed during the Jewish ascension to power in Israel some 3,500 years ago, their gene pool was enhanced when even earlier settlers from Iran were peacefully assimilated into their culture five thousand years ago; and 1,500 years before

that, according to DNA recently extracted from an Israeli cave, an influx of immigrants from Turkey arrived on the scene, carrying a gene associated with light skin and blue eyes.

To make matters even more complicated, some want to place the origins of the ancient city in Lebanon called Baalbek, a city supposedly built by the Romans, back even further into remote history. In 1860, Scottish explorer David Urquhart wrote in his diary that while visiting the site, he was told by the locals that the city of Baalbek was built by none other than Cain, son of Adam and Eve.

In Genesis, Cain kills Abel (shown here in a fresco at Acireale Cathedral in Italy), leaving Cain (and later Seth) the only child of Adam and Eve. If the Bible is historically accurate, how could there be more descendants without women around?

The book of Genesis offers yet another uncomfortable tidbit of news. In Genesis 4, we are told that after the notorious Cain killed his brother Abel, he went out and built a city. Was that city the precursor to Baalbek?

Before we go any further into biblical history, a literal reading of the Bible raises a huge problem at this point. The question raised by every

Sunday school kid in the world rears its ugly head. If Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel, and Cain killed Abel, where did the inhabitants of Cain's city come from?

Sunday school teachers everywhere struggle with that one. The elders of Baalbek didn't attempt to answer the population riddle, but they had no doubt about the geography. In the words of Istifan al-Duwayhi, the fifty-seventh patriarch of the Maronite Church, "Tradition states that the fortress of Baalbek is the most ancient building in the world. Cain, the son of Adam, built it in the year 133 of the creation, during a fit of raving madness. He gave it the name of his son Enoch and peopled it with giants who were punished for their iniquities by the Flood."

Urquhart is said to have suggested that the builders had trained mammoths to do the task. For this, he was soundly laughed out of the archaeologists' club.

It probably would have helped Urquhart's reputation if he had simply reported what he heard and left it at that, but as so many after him have done, he went on to speculate about the sheer size of the stones. They are incredible, being the largest quarried blocks yet discovered on planet Earth. They came from a nearby limestone quarry, these days numbered Quarry #1 and Quarry #2, but back in those days, it was just one big quarry. The largest block, known as the Stone of the South, weighs 1,242 tons. The next largest, called Hajjar al-Hibla or Stone of the Pregnant Woman, is solid limestone and weighs one thousand tons. We would be hard-pressed to move monsters of this kind today; how the ancient builders expected to move them is anyone's guess, but they must have had a plan because stones weighing four hundred to eight hundred tons did make their way to the fortress and were then raised twenty feet in the air and carefully placed with exact precision over the foundations.

How they did it, no one knows. Urquhart is said to have suggested that the builders had trained mammoths to do the task. For this, he was soundly laughed out of the archaeologists' club, but in his favor, I've read his diary that is readily available today—*The Lebanon (Mount Souria): A History and*

a Diary by David Urquhart—and haven't found any references to mammoths.

Urquhart himself discounted the stories that took the original construction all the way back to Cain. He thought it was built right before Noah's Flood by the wicked people who God was about to punish by drowning. Evidence of their civilization was, of course, swept away in the deluge, but he did recount various legends that giants had manhandled the huge limestone blocks, that Nimrod constructed it, that it became known as the Tower of Babel, and that Solomon built it with the help of local djinns as a summer palace for the Queen of Sheba. (The reason some blocks were left unused in the quarry, so the story went, was because the local djinns went on strike. Urquhart didn't know why, but some evidence exists that the builders were paid with rations of beer. Maybe they just ran out of spirits.)

Although the golden age of Phoenician trade lasted a long time, from somewhere around 1500–322 B.C.E., Canaan is principally remembered today because of a particularly vicious battle for the heart and soul of ancient Israel. Sidon is said to have been the birthplace of the princess Jezebel, who married Ahab, the king of Israel. The biblical books of 1 and 2 Kings tell the story in vivid detail.

Jehovah, the god of the Israelites, had forbidden intermarriage. Ahab flouted that law and soon suffered the consequences. The prophet Elijah was at the forefront of the confrontation that led to the famous battle of the gods, later set to music in Felix Mendelssohn's oratorio, *Elijah*.

Elijah called on Jezebel to renounce her Canaanite religion. She, along with 450 prophets of Baal, refused. During an epic battle between Jehovah and Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah emerged as the victor, only to flee into the desert for the requisite forty days after Jezebel vowed revenge. Eventually, Israel carried the day when their armies, commanded by the wild general Jehu, won a great battle that severed trade relationships between Israel and Canaan.

Many scholars today make the claim that Phoenicians traveled to North America, perhaps even far up the St. Lawrence and Mississippi rivers to the Great Lakes so as to transport ore from the copper mines of Lake Superior back to the burgeoning Bronze Age trade.

Elijah, after appointing a successor, soon departed Earth by ascending into heaven in a fiery chariot, an event that later inspired the title for Erich von Däniken's popular book *Chariots of the Gods*. That was the book that sparked the popular ancient alien movement.

Despite the defeat at Mount Carmel, Tyre continued to flourish right up to the time it was overthrown by Alexander the Great.

Nowadays, the official version of the Baalbek story is that it was built by the Romans, who continued to call it by its Greek name, Heliopolis. Rome did annex this ancient religious center of Phoenicia in 64 C.E. and built extensively there, including the great Temple of Jupiter, the ruins of which survive to this day and are a popular tourist destination. Undoubtedly, most of today's visible construction can be traced back to Roman times, but the foundations upon which they are built are much, much older.

All this is to say that the Phoenician civilization is old, mysterious, and worthy of much more study than has so far been accorded it. The fact that they were the unchallenged seafaring civilization of their time goes without saying. In the Bible, Ezekiel calls them "the princes of the sea" (Ezekiel 26:16).

Many scholars today make the claim that Phoenicians traveled to North America, perhaps even far up the St. Lawrence and Mississippi rivers to the Great Lakes so as to transport ore from the copper mines of Lake Superior back to the burgeoning Bronze Age trade. If so, they had Columbus beat by centuries, if not millennia.

An excavation site at Tell Barri in Baalbek, Lebanon, provides archaeologists with evidence that the area has been inhabited since the fourth millennium B.C.E.

The fact that they were secretive goes without saying. In those days, maps and routes were kept closely guarded so as to protect their trade monopoly, but enough evidence seems to have survived to warrant a lot more investigation. If even some of the evidence of their far-flung civilization proves credible, Baalbek, Lebanon, might be the oldest surviving, spiritually significant, principal city on earth. Was it indeed constructed shortly after the catastrophe that violently ended the last Ice Age? Was it contemporaneous with the construction of Göbekli Tepe? Do its early roots extend even further back in time? What was the spiritual presence that lingered so strongly there that Rome saw fit to build a great temple on the ruins of an old Canaanite religious site?

It is true that Christian Rome had a tendency to assimilate indigenous religions—"baptizing" them into the fold, so to speak. The magnificent Cathedral of Chartres, for instance, stands on the site of an ancient Druid sacred grove. Many Christmas traditions we hold dear today were originally pagan ceremonies that have been assimilated by either the early Roman government or the church. Even the Greek language was commandeered and

used instead of Latin as the principal governmental language when Rome took over the reins of power. That's why the New Testament of the Bible was written in common Greek rather than Hebrew. It was the language of commerce.

Does that explain what happened at Baalbek, that ancient center of spirituality with roots that go way back into prebiblical times, perhaps even as far back as some twelve thousand years, though?

We might never know all the secrets that the ancient Phoenician civilization could have taught us, but a few trends are visible even at our distance from this culture.

First: The mythology of the pre-Canaanite/Phoenician civilization runs deep. Oral history may not be reliable in terms of archaeological evidence, but a fire is very possibly underneath all this smoke. Think of it this way. The legends surrounding the principal gods of their civilization may very well be blown-up, exaggerated stories about real people, expanded to mythic proportions over the course of thousands of years before finally being written down and solidified. Imagine how important George Washington has become to Americans after only a few hundred years. Given the human propensity for exaggeration, in a few thousand more, he might easily be remembered as a god who walked across the Delaware River and singlehandedly slew a thousand Hessians with Harry Potter's magic wand.

Ever since that time, history proves over and over again that any quest for nationalistic power and dominance leads inevitably to a ruinous end.

Second: The Phoenician desire to dominate trade and commerce led to a great deal of secrecy surrounding information about sea routes and foreign lands. Even close-by countries such as the British Isles, Iceland, and Greenland were unknown to those who didn't have the proper Phoenician credentials to leave the Mediterranean Sea through the Straits of Gibraltar. Some good evidence exists that Christopher Columbus might have had access to Phoenician maps. Look what he managed to accomplish! Imagine how much all of humanity might have benefited from such information. In the

end, Phoenician secrecy led to the downfall of its civilization. What Greece could not negotiate, it took by force. In 334 B.C.E., when Alexander the Great conquered Baalbek and renamed it Heliopolis, he was able to easily subdue both Byblos and Sidon two years later. The remnants of the civilization succumbed to the inevitable, and the unique Phoenician culture dissolved into the Hellenistic Age. Ever since that time, history proves over and over again that any quest for nationalistic power and dominance leads inevitably to a ruinous end.

Third: The Phoenicians are frequently referred to as the "carriers" of civilization. This is a reference to the fact that because of their seafaring skills and feats of exploration, they carried their ideals, products, and culture to the whole known world. In this sense, they might be called the "missionaries" of civilization. Perhaps that influence extended all the way to America. As we shall soon see, the Red Paint people of the Northeastern Seaboard built a downsized maritime civilization as well. Was this due to Phoenician influence? What other cultures might have flourished if their desire for power and wealth had been shared rather than hoarded?

Finally: The spiritual mysteries hidden away in Baalbek's ancient past were eventually lost to us partly because of religious war and domination, both of which figure prominently in today's spiritual climate. Most modern people of the West, for instance, upon hearing the word "Islamic," immediately follow it with the word "terrorist." Palestinians and Jews have the same reaction toward each other. The words "paganism" and "shamanism" suffer from ignorant and spiritually blind modernists who equate both with primitive superstition. "Confucius say …" used to be followed with a racist joke of some kind. Catholics fight Protestants. Sometimes, they each fight others within their own ranks. Every one of these spiritual traditions have a lot to offer if people would listen to each other rather than resort to an "us against them" mentality. This kind of thinking brought down the spiritually rich and technologically proficient Phoenicians, a civilization strong enough to prosper for thousands of years. They undoubtedly thought they would last forever. No reason exists to think that we will not suffer a similar fate.

TURKEY'S ÇATALHÖYÜK: A VICTIM OF CLIMATE

CHANGE

Having recently recovered from the end of the Younger Dryas Ice Age, the world was again hit with a climate catastrophe a little more than eight thousand years ago. The weather changed abruptly, leading to cooler, dryer summers for much of the Northern Hemisphere. Exactly what happened is anyone's guess, but the trigger is called the 8.2-Kiloyear Event, named after the fact that it happened 8,200 years ago.

The most plausible explanation is that a huge meltwater pulse occurred when the Laurentide ice sheet in North America finally collapsed and two immense glacial lakes, now called Ojibwa and Agassiz, suddenly drained into the North Atlantic, disrupting the natural flow of the Atlantic currents that bring warm equatorial water north where it cools and then flows south again in a never-ending circle that is recognized as an important source of our current climate conditions. With that much cold, glacial meltwater suddenly dumped into the system, all kinds of terrible things happened. The result was what we today call climate change. The impact of such a sudden cooling of Earth's atmosphere must have had a devastating effect on the relatively new agricultural civilization that was beginning to flourish in the Middle East, having spread out from Göbekli Tepe to Sumer, Egypt, and beyond.

The city of Çatalhöyük in modern-day Turkey dates back to about 7500 B.C.E. and existed until 5700 B.C.E. The site was first excavated in 1958 by English archaeologist James Mellaart and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

These days, the dusty, sun-baked ruins of Çatalhöyük in central Turkey don't receive a lot of attention, but eight thousand years ago, it was a busy, bustling, prehistoric metropolis, boasting a farming civilization that was important in its day. Probably ten thousand or more people lived there, and most of them seemed to have been obsessed with plaster.

That's right. Plaster. They used it to line the walls of their houses and to create works of art on canvas. They even coated the skulls of their dead with it presumably to recreate an appearance of life before they were buried. Above all, they used it to glaze their pottery, and that's why archaeologists today can learn a lot about how the early inhabitants of Çatalhöyük reacted to climate change.

Michael Price reported in an article written for the August 13, 2018, edition of *Archaeology* magazine that a team of researchers led by biochemists Mélanie Roffet-Salque and Richard Evershed of the University of Bristol in the United Kingdom and archaeologist Arkadiusz Marciniak at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland, recently decided to examine

potsherds from Çatalhöyük to determine the content of animal fat that had soaked into the unglazed pots made by ancient potters. Their thinking was that dramatic climate change might show up in the amounts and kinds of feed the animals had been eating before their butchered meat was stored in clay pots. In other words, they were looking for evidence of dietary stress.

It won't be long before this same process will be used to see how extensive climate change resulting from the 8.2-Kiloyear Event occurring in one small area of the world can begin a cascading result that effects the entire population of planet Earth.

Using a technique called gas chromatography–mass spectrometry, a technique familiar to anyone who is a fan of television's *NCIS* show's forensic analyst Abby Sciuto, they determined that the ratio of the isotope deuterium, or heavy hydrogen, rose by about 9 percent in relation to other hydrogen isotopes from the samples. This amount differed from both earlier and later samples. Obviously, the livestock had been severely affected by the drought. Lower precipitation results in higher ratios of heavy hydrogen, so the drought was real, long lasting, and had a profound effect on the ancient civilization. They also found evidence from butchered bones, which indicated that fewer cattle were being raised at the same time goat herds were growing. Cattle require more grain than goats, so goats can handle drought more effectively. The people were also butchering earlier and more cleanly, indicating that meat was at a premium.

At the same time, archaeologists discovered that the site's large, communal, citylike dwellings began to give way to smaller, individual family homes. This seems to point to a shift toward an independent lifestyle featuring self-sufficiency.

It won't be long before this same process will be used to see how extensive climate change resulting from the 8.2-Kiloyear Event occurring in one small area of the world can begin a cascading result that effects the entire population of planet Earth.

Although Çatalhöyük architecture could very well have been gradually changing even before the swift, climatic event, and the switch from cattle to

goats may have already begun before the drought, it is still worth examining to learn how even minor climate change can have an effect on human civilizations.

No buildings are identified as religious temples in the town, but beautiful murals picturing now extinct aurochs, stags, and vultures, similar to the raised relief images discovered at Göbekli Tepe, suggest a symbolic mindset that hints at religion. In this regard, the carefully carved and beautifully finished female figurines discovered there are considered by most experts to be representations of goddesses. Others are doubtful, rightly claiming that archaeologists often jump to a religious explanation for almost everything.

Pictures of men featuring erect phalluses are reminiscent of the great, painted caves of western Europe. Mounted heads of cattle and other animals were hung on the walls of the dwellings, and a painting of the village, including a view of the Hasan Dag mountain peaks in the background, is sometimes cited as being the world's oldest map and other times called the world's oldest landscape painting. Visitors can take their pick.

A lot of information can still be gleaned from excavations at Çatalhöyük. Like all good mystery stories, it raises more questions than answers until all the data is gathered and examined, a process still underway.

It seems that it was a flourishing civilization. Until it wasn't.

The lack of class-related structures might suggest a utopian society with no rulers, but maybe not.

Evidence of infighting seems to begin after a sufficient time passed for the inhabitants to begin accumulating possessions, perhaps indicating a societal evolution toward upper and lower classes that resulted in class warfare, but that may be reading current ideas into ancient evidence.

On it goes.

The one lesson we can learn with a degree of confidence is that climate change played an important role in Çatalhöyük history. It's likely that what happened half a world away, the final melting of the glacial ice sheets in North America, affected daily life in the average citizen in Turkey.

Today, we face a similar situation. Glaciers in Greenland, Alaska, the Arctic region, and Antarctica are melting. We may disagree as to the cause of the phenomenon, but people from Miami to Mumbai and other low-lying

cities are already feeling the results. What's going to happen when the world's coastal cities drown? No one knows, but it's happening, and a climate change of this magnitude calls for immediate action. The effects will be catastrophic if we don't prepare in advance.

First, however, we have to admit that change is coming. That's why Çatalhöyük is so important. If we study the evidence of their coping strategies, we may yet learn a lesson from our ancient, lost ancestors.

MESOPOTAMIA: BUILT BY THE GODS

In 1853, Hormuzd Rassam discovered fragments of an ancient Sumerian text that is now considered to be the first great work of literature our civilization ever produced. After its translation, it was published in 1870 by George Smith. Although read by serious Mesopotamia scholars far and wide, it was generally consigned to oblivion in the popular press.

It took an episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* to spark any real public interest in the work. The second episode of the fifth season of the popular TV show was entitled "Darmok." In it, Patrick Stewart's character, Captain Jean-Luc Picard, quoted a line spoken by King Gilgamesh, "He who was my companion through adventure and hardship is gone forever." It didn't take long before people all over the world rushed to find a copy of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* so they could learn more about the heroes Gilgamesh, king of Uruk, and Enkidu, a wild man of the forest. It was another triumph for those who trumpet the enormous impact, and resulting responsibility, of popular television shows.

The Epic of Gilgamesh was composed more than four thousand years ago. It tells the story of how two men as different as King Gilgamesh and the savage Enkidu could triumph over adversity and develop a personal friendship. According to the story, Enkidu was created by the gods specifically to keep Gilgamesh from subjugating and oppressing his people, but after an epic battle, the two became friends and shared many adventures. Eventually, however, the now "civilized" Enkidu was given a death sentence by the gods partly as a consequence of failing to fulfill the purpose for which he was created.

Depressed and disillusioned by his friend's death, Gilgamesh undertook a long and difficult quest to discover eternal life. He believed the gods to be

unfair because they created humankind with the knowledge of eternity but without the ability to ever achieve it. This, he came to believe, was an unforgivable act.

This is Tablet V of *The Epic of Gilgamesh,* which is maintained at the Sulaymaniyah Museum in Iraq. Approximately four thousand years old, the epic tells of the heroic trials of Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu. This fifth tablet (there are eleven) describes how the two battle victoriously against Humbaba, the Guardian of the Cedar Forest.

Grieving for Enkidu and fearful of his own death, Gilgamesh decided to seek wisdom from Utnapishtim, one of the two survivors of the great Flood that had destroyed most of humanity. This flood was brought about because of two gods named Enlil and Enki. They were half brothers prone to sibling rivalry.

Enlil was the one who had wanted to create the human race in the first place. He was interested in obtaining a race of slaves who would serve the gods. It worked for a time, but he eventually got tired of what *The Epic of Gilgamesh* calls human "noise," so he decided to destroy them all with a great flood.

Enki, however, disagreed. He had done the actual work of creation, making humans out of a mixture of clay and blood, and was quite angry with his brother, not wanting to see his work go to waste.

Therefore, he decided to help Utnapishtim and his wife escape the deluge by building a boat. Utnapishtim was given precise dimensions to follow, finally sealing the hull with pitch and bitumen. Just in time, he loaded it with "all the animals of the field," gathered his family aboard, and was able to float to safety after a strong storm arose that was terrifying even to the gods, who retreated to the safety of the heavens.

The boat eventually lodged on a mountaintop, and Utnapishtim released first a dove, then a swallow, and finally a raven. The dove and swallow returned to the safety of the boat, but the raven didn't come back. This convinced Utnapishtim that dry land must be somewhere nearby, so he knew he could safely disembark.

His first order of business was to offer a sacrifice to the gods. When they "smelled the sweet savor" of the sacrifice, the gods responded with kindness. Surprisingly, it was Enlil himself who bestowed the gift of immortality as a reward. It seems that even a god can sometimes change his mind about things.

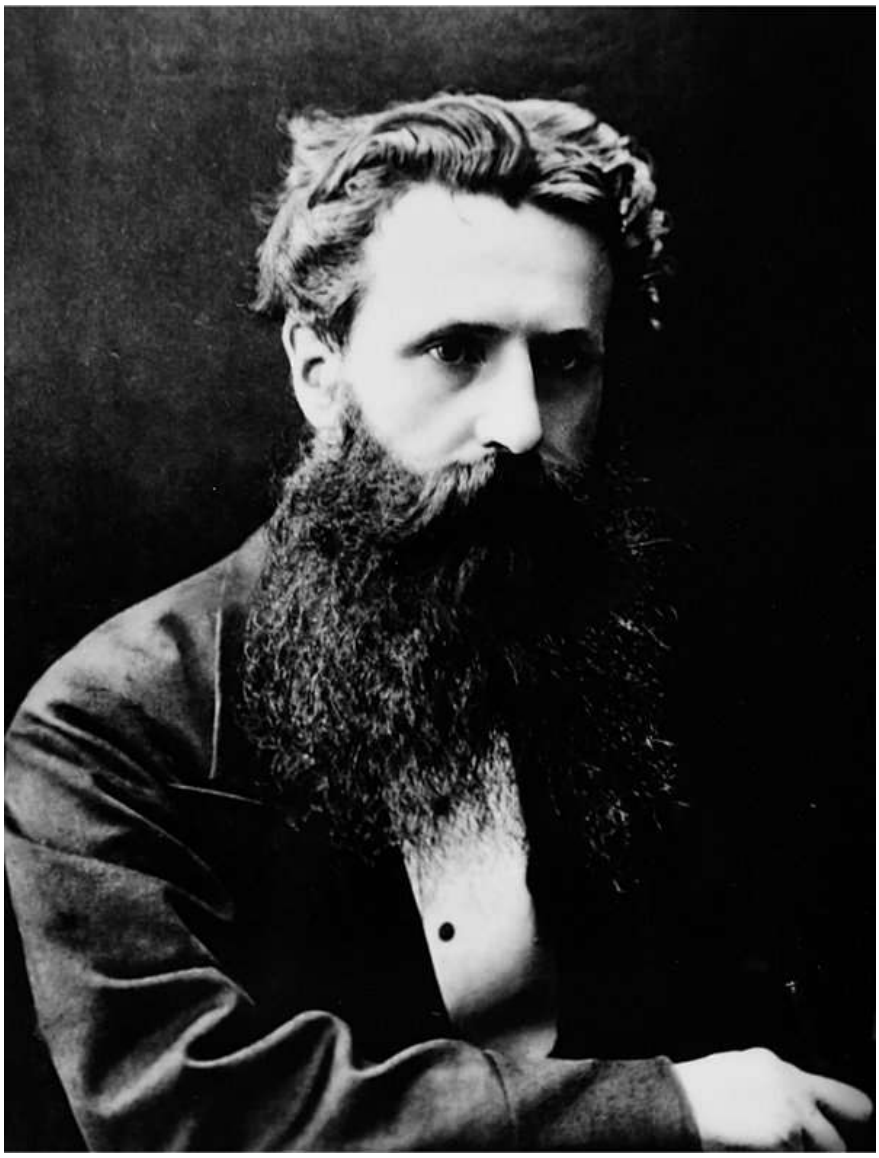
Thus, because of their faithfulness, Utnapishtim and his wife were the only two humans ever granted eternal life on Earth by the gods. Although they themselves could not impart immortality, they did share a great secret with Gilgamesh. They told him about a plant that grew only at the bottom of the sea. It was called Urshanabi, the "Plant of Heartbeat." If Gilgamesh could find this plant and partake of it, he would regain his youthfulness and live forever.

Eventually, at great risk, Gilgamesh tied stones to his feet, allowing him to walk across the sea floor. He finally found the plant and returned to the shore, where he decided to share it first with some respected elders. Whether or not this was going to be done out of kindness or as a precaution remains unclear.

Unfortunately, when he stopped to bathe and wash off the exertions of his task, a snake stole the plant, shedding its skin as it slithered away. The fruit of eternal life was thus stolen by a serpent. Gilgamesh returned home to Uruk, sadder but wiser, and was finally able to tell his story.

Like all good mythological tales, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* generated a lot of heated religious and philosophical discussion. Although no indication exists that this was ever considered a religious text, biblical scholars were quick to jump on the similarities between Utnapishtim and Noah. Was *The Epic of Gilgamesh* the basis for the story of Noah's Flood, a familiar tale that had been told for countless generations and was considered by many Jews, Muslims, and Christians around the world to be a historically accurate account? Was the beloved Genesis story merely a copy of a much older Sumerian version? If so, what implications did that hold for theological perspectives based on what were considered to be uniquely inspired scriptures?

Philosophers, too, wanted to examine this story. Was Gilgamesh selfishly looking for immortality? If so, why didn't he just eat the plant as soon as he reached shore? Or did the fact that he wanted to first give the plant to elders who had need of it demonstrate that he was selflessly (no doubt inspired by the loss of his friend Enkidu) trying to bring the gift of immortality to the human race, thereby rectifying what he considered to be an unjust act of the gods? In other words, was Gilgamesh selfish or selfless?



English Assyriologist George Smith discovered and translated *The Epic of Gilgamesh,* which includes a flood story similar to that in the Bible.

Whatever the case, his story, like mythology from around the world, can be read on many different levels, but one level is especially important. Gilgamesh undertook what mythologist Joseph Campbell called a hero's journey. While living a normal life, if you consider the life of an oppressive king "normal," the loss of a valued friend caused him to confront an essential, spiritual problem. His concern about the nature of death and eternal life led him to depart from what was, for him at least, an average life experience and undertake a spiritual quest.

True to the nature of the traditional hero's journey, he traveled to

unfamiliar landscapes, battled strange creatures, and triumphed over adversity. He looked death in the face. He sought out otherworldly entities while looking for his own holy grail, the precious gift of immortality that could be bestowed only by the gods.

That's the nature of the hero's journey. It's a call to adventure, a departure from the familiar into the unknown, a triumphal fulfillment of the quest, and a return home, bearing the gift of wisdom. Everyone from Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* to Galahad in the Arthurian saga and Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars* has made this journey. Joe Campbell insists it's a journey each and every one of us should make as well if we want to live an authentic, fulfilling life.

Some insist that *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is based on a real, historical person whose story was eventually exaggerated to mythic proportions. Others insist it is purely an example of classic mythology. Many, no doubt, read it as a fairy story meant for children. However we view it, it sheds light on an ancient and venerable truth. No matter how far back in history we go, and this story takes us back a very long way, it seems as though people have always been concerned with the same spiritual problems:

- Who are we?
- Why are we here?
- How should we live?

These are essential questions that deal with what it means to be alive and a functioning member of the human race. They are as ancient as our origins. In fact, the ability to ponder them probably marked the first step in our becoming human in the first place. As far as we know, animals don't spend any time considering these things. Humans do. In light of such questions, the dayto-day activities that usually attract our attention seem pretty trivial. After all, if you're concerned about the destiny of your eternal soul, who cares about what color you've decided to paint your kitchen?

In the end, Gilgamesh achieved his quest and returned to Uruk, bringing wisdom, but it was not the wisdom he sought. It was far greater.

What was that wisdom? Simply this: The object of his quest did not lie in his immortal body but rather in his immortal story. What we leave behind is not biological in nature but spiritual. As long as people are alive who tell our story, we live forever. The proof of this insight lies in the fact that the

first great work of literature our civilization produced is still being told and retold, argued about, studied, and discussed.

Gilgamesh lives! He lives in his deeds. He lives in his ideas. He lives in his story. If Jean-Luc Picard of *Star Trek* fame is any indication, Gilgamesh will live on well into future centuries as well.

This is the traditional interpretation given to one of two great works of literature that come to us from the ancient, mysterious, and fascinating land of Mesopotamia. The name comes from the Greek. It translates roughly to the land "between two rivers"—the Tigris and Euphrates, which are referenced in the Bible as two of the four rivers that rise in the Garden of Eden. Today, it is situated in Iraq and parts of Iran, Syria, and Turkey.

Although it is a troubled part of the world, it has an important story to tell in the history of civilization. Until the discovery of Göbekli Tepe, it was thought to be the place where agriculture arose between five thousand and six thousand years ago, bringing with it the invention of civilization. Mesopotamia has been excavated extensively by archaeologists, who universally say they have barely begun to scratch the surface of what is yet to be discovered.

Surprisingly, much of what has been uncovered supports the backstory of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. The city of Uruk, for instance, is a real place and was possibly the city in which one of the first written languages was invented.

When *The Epic of Gilgamesh* was discovered, little did people know that another great textual bombshell was soon to explode, beginning one of the most disputed and hotly debated arguments between disparate interpretive camps involving archaeology, mythology, history, religion, and even ancient alien aficionados.

Four years before the discovery of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, a scholar named Austen Henry Layard, while pouring over the contents of material hidden away in the Library of Ashurbanipal in what is now Mosul, Iraq, found fragments of a 3,800-year-old manuscript containing a Babylonian creation epic called *Enuma Elish*. A full twenty-seven years passed until it was finally published by the same George Smith who had earlier published *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.

It told the story of seven "judges of hell" who ruled the land before the

onset of the great Flood. Their leader was a mysterious half-fish, half-human figure named Oannes.

Strangely, this isn't the only place that such a being appears in mythology. In the ancient ruins at Tiahuanaco in western Bolivia stands an enigmatic statue of a figure who seems to be garbed in the scales of a fish. Graham Hancock, writing in *Fingerprints of the Gods*, comments about the image:

> It was very ancient and spoke of the "gods of the lake, with fish tails, called Chullua and Umantua." In this … fish-garbed figure, it seemed that there was a curious out-of-place echo of Mesopotamian myths, which spoke strangely, and at length, about amphibious beings, "endowed with reason," who had visited the land of Sumer in remote prehistory. The leader of these beings was named Oannes.

Robert Temple, author of *The Sirius Mystery*, describes Oannes:

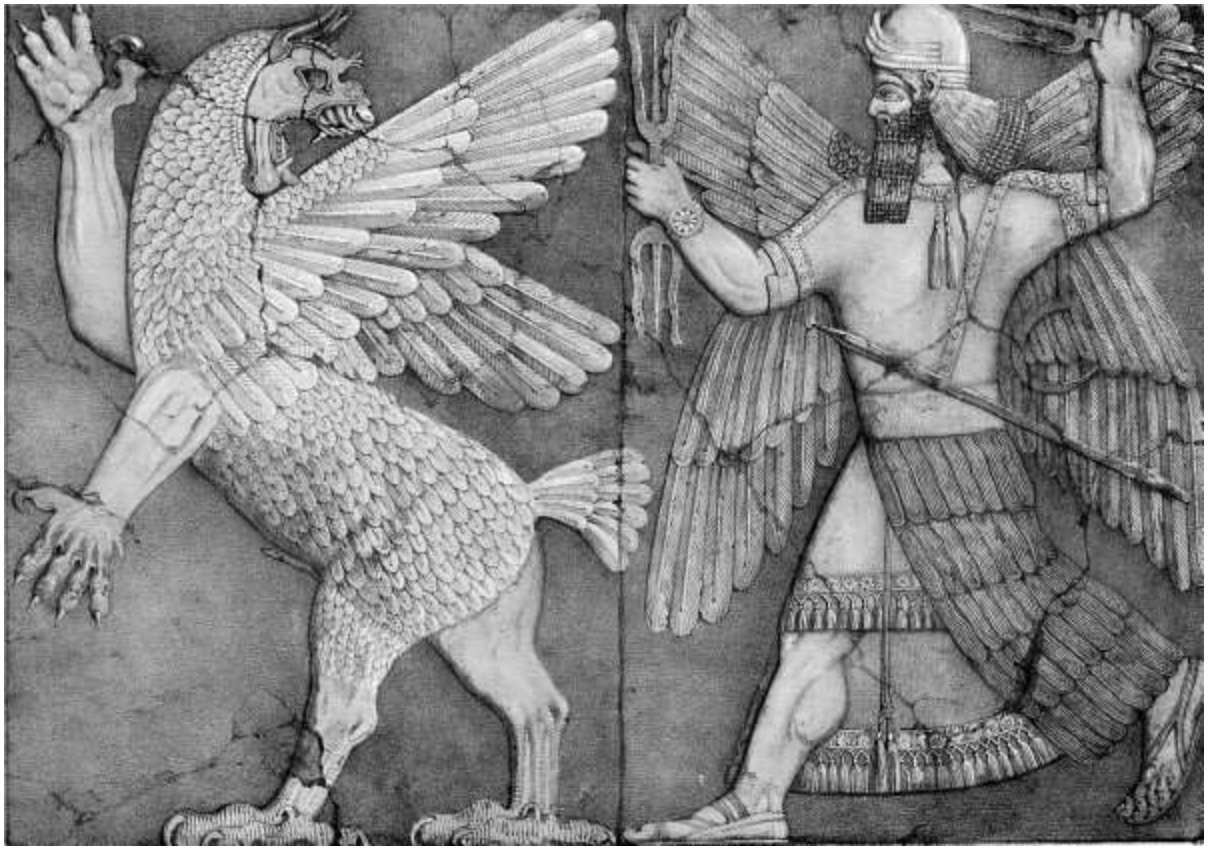
> [His] whole body was like a fish; and had under a fish's head another head, and also feet below, similar to those of a man, sub-joined to the fish's tail. His voice, too, was articulate and human; and a representation of him is preserved even to this day.… When the sun set, it was the custom of this Being to plunge into the sea, and abide all night in the deep; for he was amphibious.

How do cultures half a world apart revere such a similar entity as a founding god? Where did they get the idea? How is it that both Bolivian and Mesopotamian craftsmen sculpt the same images? Did they share a common memory? Are they portraying a common story? No one really knows, but the mystery deepens.

When *The Epic of Gilgamesh* was discovered, little did people know that another great textual bombshell was soon to explode.…

Enuma Elish goes on to tell the story of the god Marduk, also called Nibiru, who had, in the beginning, created humans as a slave race in order to

serve the gods. Slaves need supervision, so to accomplish that task, he assembled a team of six hundred “Watchers” or “Holy Ones,” also called Anunnaki, which translates roughly to “gods of heaven and Earth.” In keeping with their title, three hundred of them were to serve in heaven and three hundred on Earth. Marduk was a son of the god named either Enki or Ea, also known as the “god of the waters.”



This is a scan of an engraving based on a bas relief at a Babylonian temple. It appears to depict Marduk driving out the beast of Chaos called Tiamat as told in the *Enuma Elish*.

Now the story gets confusing. Traditional scholars viewed the whole epic as a myth, which is interesting but certainly too fantastic to be considered real history.

Enter the late Zecharia Sitchin. He insisted that the name Anunnaki didn’t mean “gods of heaven and Earth.” He said it was better translated as “those who from heaven to Earth came.” He even located their home world on a planet named Nibiru, which he claimed comes within traveling distance of Earth from time to time as it follows a long, elliptical orbit through the heavens. Nibiru, remember, was another name for the god Marduk. The

inhabitants of Nibiru, he wrote, were in trouble. For some reason, their atmosphere needed to be seeded with gold from time to time in order to remain viable. As luck would have it, gold was plentiful on planet Earth, but in order to mine it in sufficient quantities, the Nibiruans needed slaves, so with a little genetic DNA manipulation, the human race came to be—created, as it were, from lower life forms that already walked on Earth.

The academic battle lines were drawn and continue to hold public interest to this day. Traditional scholars insist that we are dealing with mythology. Ancient alien enthusiasts support the idea of extraterrestrial DNA manipulation in our distant path. Historians wonder if the story is based on facts that have been garbled over the centuries.

To make matters worse, the Christians stumbled into the debate when they took to heart a popular hymn written in 1906 by Athelstan Riley. It's called, appropriately enough, "Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones." To this day, it remains a staple of most hymn books, although most believers think they are singing about angels, seraphs, and cherubim, not ancient slave overseers.

Even still, the matter might have retreated into the dustbins of academic debate were it not for newspaper headlines in January 2016. Astronomers spotted evidence that pointed to an undiscovered planet in our solar system orbiting our Sun in a huge, elliptical orbit out beyond Pluto. Although they had not yet actually seen the planet, they could figure out the number of objects, possibly moons, it had captured with its gravitational pull, so they knew it must be pretty big. For a while, it certainly seemed as though it was a worthy candidate to replace Pluto as "our" ninth planet.

Pluto, a few years earlier, had been downsized to "dwarf planet" status. Many people disagreed with the decision, thinking that astronomers had been much too high-handed about the whole process. After all, as schoolchildren, many of us were forced to memorize the names of the planets in order out from the Sun. It's easy to find it disconcerting that a small group of astronomers could arbitrarily disrupt our whole concept of the solar system.

The new planet existed way out beyond the "Goldilocks Zone," a narrow band neither too hot nor too cold to support life, so it certainly didn't seem to be a good candidate for the mythical planet Nibiru. Still, because it was hidden away outside our sight for all this time, it was mysterious. It also seemed to be coming closer, so it was bound to set off serious speculation, especially because the whole ancient alien theory can be traced back to

Zecharia Sitchin's translation: "Anunnaki: those who from heaven to Earth came."

What all this means is that the Mesopotamian civilization, which until recently was considered the birthplace of our civilization, now had, to some people at least, a plausible genesis outside of our solar system. All they needed was a belief that the universe is a very big place, that it contains life outside of our planet, and that humanlike life forms visited us in the ancient past.

This immediately draws snorts of derision from those who do not believe such visitations ever took place, but to be fair, that belief, too, is made up more of opinion than fact. After all, when you agree to consider the possibility, a very reasonable body of evidence exists that points to alien visitation.

There is speculation recently that a ninth planet exists in the solar system orbiting beyond the trans-Neptunian objects. About five to ten times the mass of Earth (shown in comparison in this illustration), its existence would explain the unusual orbits of some of these trans-Neptunian planetoids. Author Zecharia Sitchin speculated long before this discovery that aliens from such a planet came to Earth and were the basis of stories about the Anunnaki.

Once you open that door, though, it makes possible the idea that mythical gods and goddesses who brought us civilization were not simply

made-up beings or figments of the fertile imaginations of an ancient, priestly class. Instead, they might have been actual entities from other planets, dimensions, or time zones who were elevated to the status of gods or angels after centuries of myth telling and the resultant expansion of legends and stories.

Of course, another explanation exists. Scholars such as Andrew Collins and Graham Hancock trace the Anunnaki, or Anunna, to at least one ancestral civilization composed of very real, but very old, human antecedents. They were the remnants of a very Earth-bound civilization that had survived the great cataclysm of the Younger Dryas Event and sought to teach the arts of civilization to our primitive, Stone Age ancestors. This theory certainly explains the sudden blossoming of symbolic thinking, astronomy, art, and architecture that burst forth on the Sumerian scene with no evidence of a previous evolutionary buildup.

It's very difficult to ignore the texts about this matter. The ancient religious literature seems to take this theory quite literally. Take this passage, for instance, from the first seven verses of Genesis, chapter 6:

> When men began to increase in number on the earth, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose.… The Nephilim [some translations use the word "Giants"] were on the earth in those days —and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown. The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord God was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the Lord said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth."

Who were these Nephilim, fathered by the mysterious "sons of God"? Were they children of the Anunnaki, the "heroes of old, men of renown"? The Old Testament text comes from roughly the same geographical location as the earlier Babylonian and Sumerian stories of Mesopotamia. Were they all related? Do they recount religious myths or historical legends based on fact? We may never know for sure, but the debate goes on.

Before we leave this theory hanging in our imaginations, it might prove

informative to travel halfway around the world to the homeland of the Hopi Indians of the American Southwest. In Hopi mythology, their ancient ancestors were saved from a series of catastrophes that overcame their world. The ones who came to their aid were their friends, the Ant People, who gave them shelter and saw them through the worst of the destruction.

In Hopi, the word “ant” is *anu*. The root word for “friends” is *naki*. Thus, “ant friends” can be translated *anu-naki*, which sounds very much like the Sumerian Anunnaki. Is this just coincidence, or were the Anunnaki, the “heroes of old, the men of renown,” more widespread and important than we have been taught?

All this speculation revolves around what archaeologists sometimes refer to as the “Sumerian problem.” Even the intrepid adventurer Thor Heyerdahl of Kon-Tiki fame was troubled by this vexing problem. Simply stated, when the Sumerian civilization burst onto the scene some six thousand years ago, it seemed to arrive as a fully formed, mature civilization. Archaeologists found sophisticated jewelry, advanced city building, and fully functioning reed boats that, as Heyerdahl proved beyond doubt when he sailed across the Atlantic on his *Ra* vessel, were capable of crossing oceans.

How did all this appear right out of the blue? Some kind of proto-Sumeria civilization had to have existed, but if so, where was it?

Scientists don’t like mythology very much. They can’t measure it or carbon date it, so they tend to ignore it, but the Sumerian civilization came equipped with an intriguing mythology that explained their origins. The early texts insist that survivors from an antediluvian civilization traveled to Mesopotamia after a catastrophic flood inundated their homeland, carrying with them the wisdom needed to begin Sumerian culture. These sages were ancestors who lived “in the ancient times.”

British author Graham Hancock has speculated that somewhere under the Persian Gulf is evidence of a lost civilization that was a precursor to the Sumerian culture.

Where did they come from, though? Where was their homeland? Archaeologists have yet to uncover it.

Graham Hancock in his book *Underworld* puts forth a theory that the homeland of the ancient Sumerian sages is now underwater in the Persian Gulf. A long time ago, that area was dry land. If a now submerged protocivilization once existed there, the "Sumerian problem" won't be solved until we begin searching in the right place.

It's a good theory that ties Sumerian mythology in with practical archaeology. It explains the sudden ascendance of Sumerian civilization. It takes into account the Flood epics found in the ancient texts. It explains why an ancestral civilization has not been found. It checks all the right boxes. The Persian Gulf has been submerged for at least the last fourteen thousand years. All that is needed is to push back the accepted dates for the beginnings of

civilization and revise the story we have all been taught in our history books.

That's the problem. Archaeologists prefer to find artifacts that fit a traditional story, but our accepted and approved story doesn't allow enough time in human development for a precivilization to exist before the so-called "first" civilization. To acknowledge such a revolutionary idea is to completely change everything the world of historical academia now believes.

In short, Hancock's theory implies that civilized, advanced human beings have been around a lot longer than is now accepted. As a result, we find ourselves in a circular loop of arguments.

"Where is the evidence?"

"Under the Persian Gulf. We have to dive for it."

"That costs money, though, and we're not going to give you any support for your wild theory until you come up with some sort of proof."

"We can't find any proof until you give us the money and support."

Round and round we go. When Hancock inquired about mounting an expedition on his own, he discovered that he needed to obtain permission from officials in Iraq, the U.S. Navy, the CIA, Texaco, Iran, the king of Saudi Arabia, and the emirs of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Sharjah, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai. Those are pretty daunting hoops to jump through before you can even begin to undertake something that is clearly apolitical and serves only to help us better understand the roots of human civilization.

The "Sumerian problem," therefore, continues to cast a long shadow over the quest for human origins.

However Mesopotamian civilization began, undoubtedly, some rich and powerful cultures were subsequently born there. The area was an anchor of the fabled Fertile Crescent. For thousands of years, it was home to civilizations such as the Sumerians, the Assyrians, the Akkadians, and the Babylonians. These were civilizations that gave us legal codes and literature. They were one of the birthplaces of mathematics and astronomy. They produced city-states, ziggurats, and the famous Hanging Gardens of Babylon. They influenced such historic luminaries as Sargon, Akkad, and Cyrus the Great. They figure prominently in many ancient, religious texts such as *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, the *Enuma Elish*, and the Bible. Without Mesopotamia, the "Land Between the Rivers," our civilization would look much different than it does today.

EGYPT AND OTHER AFRICAN ORIGINS

ZEP TEPI: PRECURSORS OF THE FIRST TIME

Zep Tepi, the "First Time," is the Egyptian equivalent of "In the beginning, God.…"

When I first stood on the Giza Plateau and saw the Pyramids and the Sphinx, I had a humbling moment of awe and wonder when I realized that I might very well be standing on the same spot of ground and surveying the same scene that once captured the attention of Alexander the Great, Cleopatra, the young Jesus, and innumerable other people of fame and legend. It almost took my breath away.

At Giza, if you can dodge the hundreds of locals who want to sell you something for "one American dollar" or escape the scam artists who will give you a free camel ride down the hill from where the tourist buses park only to

charge you an arm and a leg to take you back up, you can really take a step backward in time.

How far back, though? That's the big question. Just because people have been living here for thousands and thousands of years with no clear-cut break in the culture doesn't mean that the founding civilization is even close to being understood. When you listen to the arguments, and they are heated, bitter ones, you soon come to the conclusion that the story of the first Egyptians who lived during the time of the *Zep Tepi* is lost in the mists of time, and yet, clues are everywhere. The problem doesn't come from lack of evidence. The problem lies in how that evidence is interpreted.

Some of the most ancient texts to be found in Egypt are called the Edfu Building Texts. They tell the story of a group of sages who sailed the seven seas in large ships after their homeland was destroyed by a great flood.

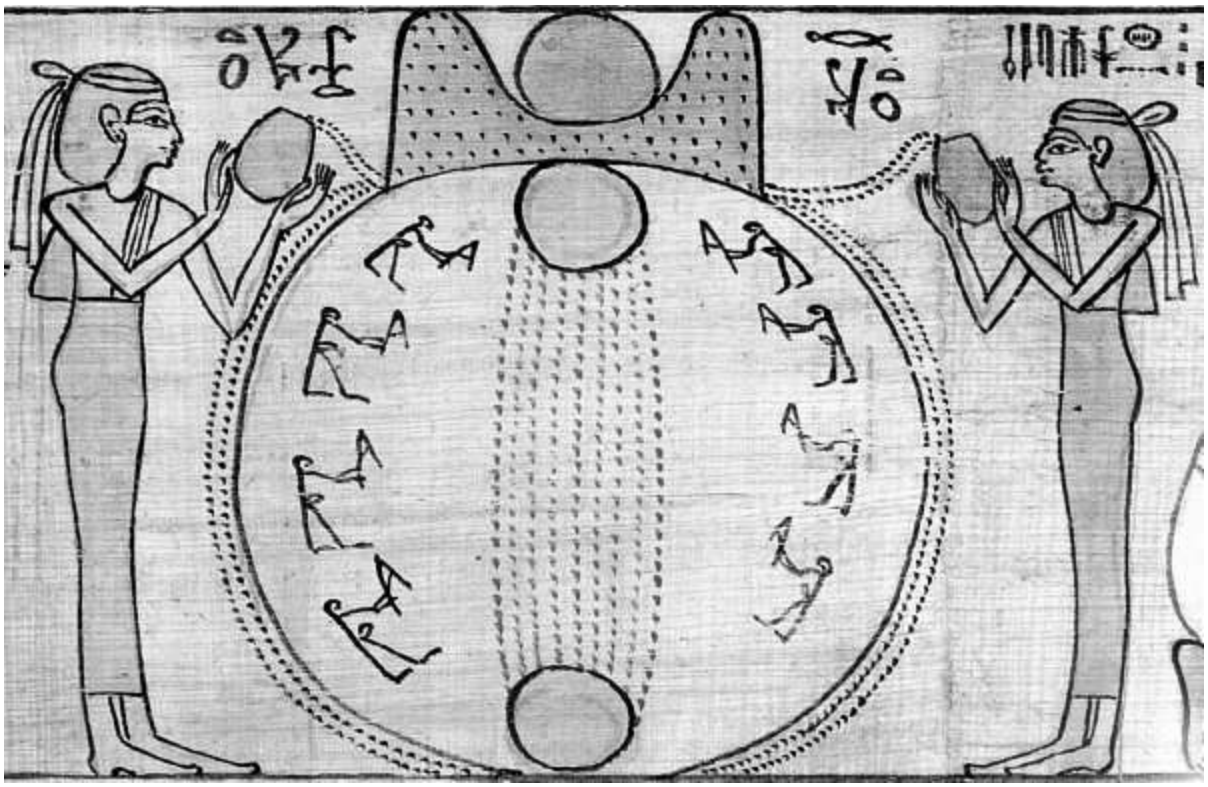
> The gods left their lands [after a great cataclysm had destroyed their island kingdom] and sailed to another part of the primeval world. They journeyed through the lands of the primeval age. In any place they settled they founded new kingdoms.

The texts go on to describe these ancient "gods":

> Builder gods who fashioned, in the primeval time, the Lords of the Light, the Ghosts, the Ancestors who raised the seed for gods and men, the Senior Ones who came into being at the beginning, who illuminated this land when they came forth united.

When this story was told to an ancient Greek by the name of Solon, he eventually passed it down to an ancestor named Plato. That led to the legend of what we now call the Atlantis tradition.

The ancient sages sought to pass on their wisdom legacy to the Stone Age peoples who had survived the deluge and were attempting to dig themselves out from the rubble. Their hope was to begin civilization anew. All this happened, according to the Edfu Texts, during the *Zep Tepi*, the "First Time." It is no wonder the ancient Egyptians believed that gods walked on Earth back then.



A hieroglyph depicting Zep Tepi from Egypt's Twenty-first Dynasty (c. 1075–945 B.C.E.) shows the goddesses of North and South pouring water onto the land while the Ogdoad gods hoe the soil.

Right off the bat, then, we've got a problem interpreting the evidence of early Egyptian civilization. Was what we call the beginning of their culture a true beginning, or was it a rebuilding, with help, from an even earlier civilization?

It's easy to imagine a seafaring culture such as the one we now identify with the supposed mythical Atlantis civilization devastated by a worldwide calamity. This could possibly have been brought about by a direct impact of a segmented comet that, according to many modern geologists, could have resulted in the end of the Younger Dryas Ice Age and been the trigger for a rapid rise in ocean levels. Part of this culture could have ridden out the devastation, especially if they were at sea when it happened. With their homeland destroyed, they might have decided to sail to places as far apart as Egypt and Mesoamerica, where they taught primitive people lessons that had been painstakingly acquired down through the ages. Their advanced civilization may have been destroyed, but much of its wisdom could be preserved in the language of mathematically coded building projects, awaiting a day when another civilization would arise that would be intelligent

enough to interpret the ancient secrets.

Does this explain why the *Khufu* ship was buried at the foot of the Great Pyramid around 4,500 years ago? After all, what is a ship doing buried in the desert at the Giza Plateau? Traditionalists say it was built to provide transportation for the dead Pharaoh, who would need it during his voyage to the stars, but on what do they base this belief? Speculation.

All of a sudden, the so-called myth of an Atlantis tradition takes on new meaning. The evidence is there. It's a matter of how we interpret it.

More is yet to come.

In 1994, Robert Bauval and Adrian Gilbert wrote *The Orion Mystery*. It brought into public scrutiny a theory that had been percolating in academic circles since the 1960s. The basic idea was that the Pyramids of Giza were built to mimic on Earth the position of the stars in the belt of the constellation Orion, the Hunter.

Orion is one of the first constellations in the night sky that star gazers learn to identify. The three stars of his belt are easily spotted. They seem to form a straight line until you look closely and see that one is slightly offset. If you Google a map of Egypt, you'll see right away that the three pyramids are offset in identical fashion.

One of the principal gods of Egyptian religious mythology is Osiris. An Osiris cult ruled Egypt for centuries. Osiris has traditionally been identified with Orion, so the relationship makes perfect sense. This identification was further enhanced when Egyptologists discovered a southern shaft running upward from the King's Chamber of the Great Pyramid. During the age traditionally attributed to the building of the Pyramids, it would have mimicked the barrel of a gun aimed at the belt of Orion.

In Bauval's words, as recalled by Graham Hancock in his book *Fingerprints of the Gods*:

> What I found was that the shaft had been precisely targeted on Alnitak, the lowest of the three belt stars, which crossed the meridian at altitude 45 degrees around the year 2475 B.C.… If you look carefully on a clear night you'll see that the smallest of the three stars, the one at the top which the Arabs call Mintaka, is slightly offset to the east of the principal diagonal formed by the other two. This pattern is mimicked on the ground where we see the

> Pyramid of Menkaure is offset by exactly the right amount to the east of the principal diagonal formed by the Pyramid of Khafre (which represents the middle star, Alnilam) and the Great Pyramid, which represents Alnitak. It's really quite obvious that all these monuments were laid out according to a unified site plan that was modeled with extraordinary precision on those three stars.… What they did at Giza was to build Orion's Belt on the ground.

For some reason, this insight riled traditional Egyptologists. Others, however, were delighted. It was a theory that embraced traditional Egyptian mythology while placing the building of the Pyramid within accepted time spans.

Bauval wasn't content to leave it there, though. After carefully measuring the Giza architecture, reducing everything to the same scale, and then superimposing a map of the ground over a map of the heavens, he determined that although the general thrust of his theory could be seen in all eras, only one time frame occurred in which the stars were in an exact position to line up perfectly with his theory. That was in 10450 B.C.E.

The traditionalists didn't like it. They insisted that no ancient civilization existed back in those days that was anywhere close to being able to construct something as sophisticated as what stood on the Giza Plateau.

Then came the discovery of Göbekli Tepe. It was just as sophisticated, if not more so, and unquestionably preceded the Pyramids by five thousand years. Henceforth, no one could say that no previous human civilization existed that was capable of building complex structures.

According to conventional wisdom, the Pyramids simply could not have been built any earlier than six thousand years ago because only Paleolithic humans existed then and they just couldn't have done it—but they did do something similar at least five thousand years previously.

The battle lines were now drawn. Two groups squared off. One took the 2475 B.C.E. date as gospel truth. The other jumped onboard the 10450 B.C.E. ancient-civilization train.

That's where things stood for a while until more information threw another complication into the bubbling stew of Egyptology.

Right next to the Pyramids stands or, to be a bit more accurate, reclines an even more enigmatic structure. It's called the Sphinx. Nothing about this

structure quite fits traditional thinking.

First, it is carved into the native bedrock and represents the body of a lion with the head of a man. That makes no sense at all unless you offer some purely speculative motives for the project.

Second, although the traditional story is that it was built at the same time as the Pyramids, the image has absolutely nothing in common with them. It seems totally out of context. Because it is carved into bedrock, it sits in a deep well of sorts, which is constantly filling up with drifting sand. For thousands of years at a time, only the head was sticking up out of the desert. No one even knew about the lion body until it was excavated.

Since so much has been written about the riddle of the Sphinx, the easiest thing is to simply summarize the arguments. Traditional Egyptologists usually say that the whole complex, Pyramids and Sphinx together, were built at roughly the same time, about 2575–2467 B.C.E., by three pharaohs of the Fourth Dynasty: Khufu, Khafre, and Menkaure. (Their Greek names are often used: Cheops, Chephren, and Mycerinus.)

The strange thing about Egypt's famous Sphinx is that, although it stands next to the Great Pyramids of Giza, it apparently has nothing to do with their functions as tombs for kings. Why, then, was it constructed? The answer might have something to do with *when* it was built—possibly thousands of years before the pyramids.

According to accepted doctrine, the Pyramids were built as tombs. Nothing more esoteric was involved. This theory is officially called “Tombs and Tombs Only.” Anything else is usually referred to as New Age nonsense and lumped together with ancient aliens and so-called lost civilizations. Giza is a necropolis. It’s a home for the dead, and that’s it!

If that’s the case, though, then how do we explain the Sphinx? It doesn’t seem to have much to do with burying somebody. No tombs are inside.

“Well,” the traditionalists reply, “that’s easy. The Sphinx bears the head of Pharaoh Khafre, who had it built as a monument to his glory.”

Others, however, are not quite so quick to accept that which is, let’s face it, speculation, albeit of the official kind. Ignoring the obvious question that if Khafre were already building a pyramid, then why did he need a lion as well, they point out two major problems that have yet to be answered.

- After careful inspection, years of arguing, and hundreds, if not thousands, of carefully worded and peer-reviewed papers, the consensus now seems to be that the head of the Sphinx is a modified addition to the original statue. In other words, the head was originally that of a lion, just like the rest of the structure. Pharaoh Khafre, if he had anything at all to do with it, probably had it resculpted to look like him. This, of course, implies that the Sphinx does, indeed, bear his likeness, but it could just as easily be someone else. Does this mean that the Sphinx was originally crafted before Khafre’s time and is, therefore, older than the accepted dates of the Pyramids, then? Possibly, but how much older? That leads to the second point.
- The Sphinx has spent much of its time, over the course of thousands of years, buried in the drifting sands of the Giza Plateau. It’s only when someone takes the time and invests the effort to dig it out that it is exposed to erosion and wear, but the body, the oldest original portion of the figure, shows unmistakable signs of water erosion. How could this be? It’s surrounded by desert! It doesn’t rain in the Sinai, at least not enough to cause the kind of visible wear evidenced here. What’s going on?

Well, as it turns out, the Sinai is a young desert. It wasn’t always dry. Eleven thousand to fifteen thousand years ago, the Giza Plateau was a well-

watered, palm-covered paradise. While it would have made no sense to build such a great edifice in a way that was guaranteed to cover it up with drifting sand, it would have made perfect sense to build it back when it was surrounded by lush forests and grass that enjoyed abundant rain.

That makes the Sphinx at least eleven thousand years old, though. That's way too old for traditional Egyptologists.

After a lot of argument, which is ongoing to this day, the answer to the age of both the Sphinx and Egyptian *Zep Tepi*, the "First Time," might lie in the science of astronomy.

Assume for a minute that the Sphinx was originally a lion in both head and body. That certainly makes sense and is a reasonable starting point. Does its position reveal anything about its age?

It might do just that. The lion on the Giza Plateau faces due east. Every Spring Equinox, the day when night and day are equal in length, it is therefore positioned to watch the sunrise, but behind that sunrise, it sees a particular constellation of the zodiac. One such constellation, of course, is Leo the Lion.

When did the sun last rise with the constellation of Leo behind it on the morning of the Spring Equinox? It was during the span of years that ran from about 12,800–11,600 years ago. This was precisely the era of the Younger Dryas Ice Age.

When was the Giza Plateau last favored with a rainy climate? Exactly at that time.

When do both the Edfu Texts and contemporary Egyptologists place the *Zep Tepi*, the "First Time," the age when the primal gods of Egypt began the Egyptian civilization? During that time. When did Plato say the Atlantis catastrophe occured? Exactly at that same time.

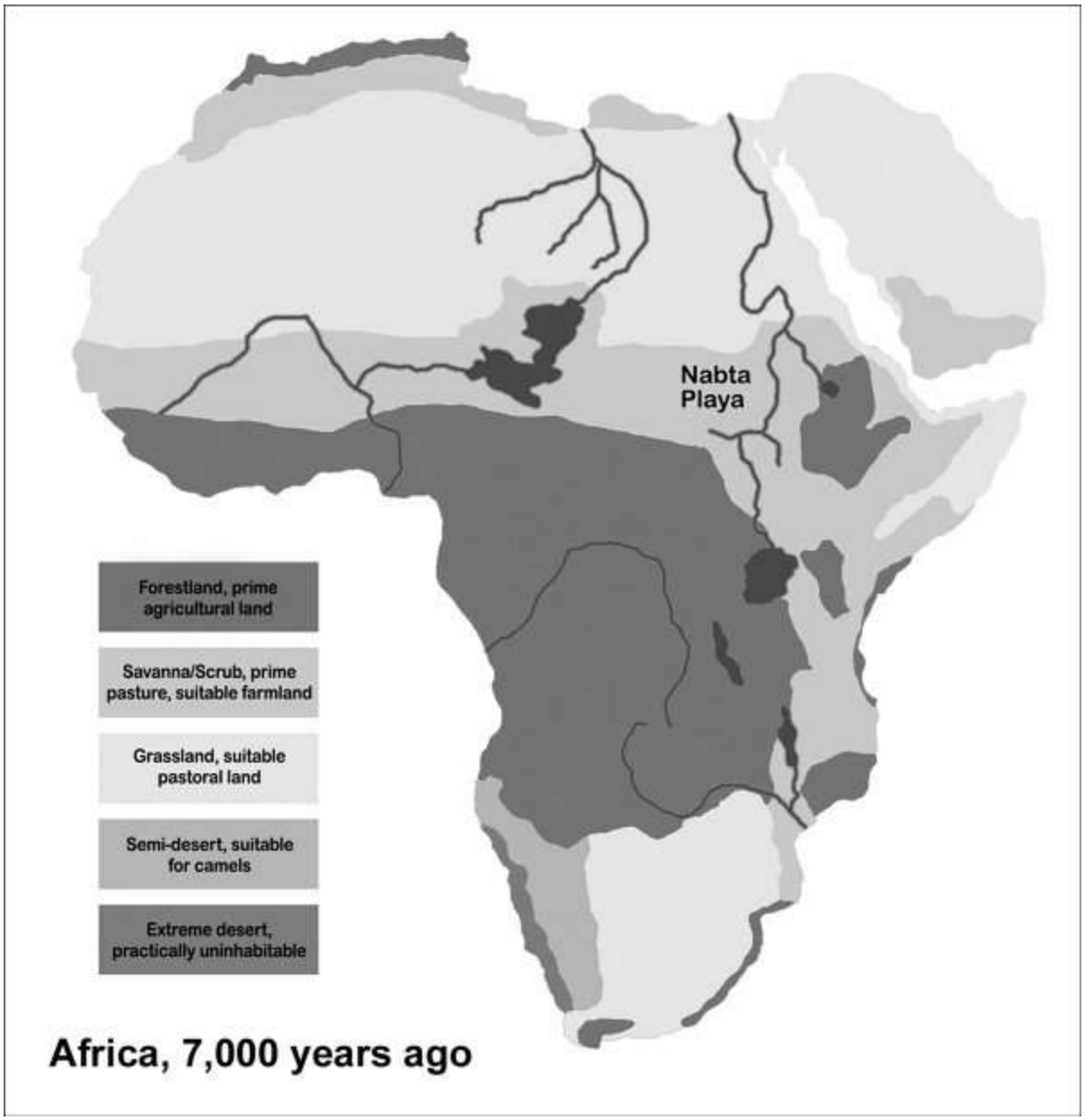
Graham Hancock explains it concisely in his book *Magicians of the Gods*:

> The essence of the argument is that there was an ancient globally-distributed doctrine—"as above, so below"—that set out quite deliberately to create monuments on the ground that copied the patterns of certain significant constellations in the sky. Moreover, since the position of all stars changes slowly but continuously as a result of the precession, it is possible to use particular

> configurations of astronomically aligned monuments to deduce the dates they represent—i.e. the dates when the stars were last in the position depicted by the monuments on the ground.… The heart of the matter involves two constellations—the constellation Leo, rising due east above the sun at dawn on the spring equinox in the epoch of 10,500 B.C.E., and the constellation of Orion, which the Ancient Egyptians visualized as the celestial figure of the god Osiris, the deceased god-king who ruled over the afterlife.

This is a pretty convincing argument. The evidence may be circumstantial, but is it any less so than the evidence presented for a later date of construction?

The theory ought to, at the very least, be considered. Unfortunately, Egyptologists, like well-entrenched professionals everywhere, tend to pull their wagons into a circle whenever they feel threatened. The idea of a lost civilization, unknown to us in these so-called enlightened days, is anathema, so the questions remain unanswered, but the evidence still waits for fresh eyes and open minds to examine it.



Seven thousand years ago (and more), Africa had a much different climate. What is now the Sahara in the north was grassland and savannah, where it was possible to raise livestock and farm. The Nabta Playa (located in what is now southernmost Egypt) was prime pastureland.

Nabta Playa: Ancient Astronomers of the Nubian Desert

Twelve thousand years ago, Nabta Playa, situated on the Tropic of Cancer in what is now the unforgiving, dry, hot, lifeless Nubian Desert of southern Egypt, was a flourishing savannah. A playa is a lake, and although it's hard to picture it today, Nabta Playa once attracted large herds of antelope, gazelle, buffalo, and large giraffes that fed on the lush grasslands.

Such abundance didn’t go unnoticed for long. Early humans were eventually drawn to the place and soon made their presence known. These people might very well have built the first civilization that eventually led to the great Nile Delta cities further north.

The first arrivals were probably pastoral nomads who may have set up seasonal camps and stayed as long as food and water were plentiful. Archaeologists haven’t found a lot of ceramic pottery from this period, but the few pieces they have found are considered some of the oldest in all of Africa.

To get an idea of what was going on elsewhere in the world, Göbekli Tepe was just being built in Turkey. Stonehenge wasn’t even a glimmer on the horizon yet. The Younger Dryas Ice Age was beginning to wind down, and the climate was starting to moderate.

Nine thousand years ago, the people began to settle in permanently, building huts with fireplaces and deep, walk-in wells that provided water yearround. Edible plants were abundant, including legumes, fruit, millet, sorghum, and tubers.

In short, all the conditions were ripe for the founding of a civilization. Between eight thousand and seven thousand years ago, such a civilization developed, featuring domesticated animals such as goats and sheep and an organized labor force to care for them.

Then tragedy struck. Climate change led to severe drought conditions, and the early settlements were abandoned for a thousand years. Arid conditions returned, and the city seemed finished before it had really ever gotten started.

However, six thousand years ago, the droughts subsided, animals returned, people followed them, and Nabta Playa entered into its golden age. An advanced, complex civilization began, and the people’s focus turned from simple survival to astronomy. They began to build complex, megalithic structures that are among the first ever constructed in Africa.

In 1974, anthropologist Fred Wendorf, then from Southern Methodist University in Texas, found some potsherds and a few other artifacts sticking up out of the shifting desert sands. Just enough of them were in view to pique his interest, but not enough to warrant a major dig. A few decades later, however, everything changed. Eventually, dozens of megaliths, large and

small, began to be revealed. What eventually became obvious was that a sophisticated, advanced civilization once thrived in this desert. It preceded the European megalithic civilization by hundreds of years. Indeed, these may be the among the oldest such monuments yet discovered.

One of the most significant of the megaliths is called the Calendar Circle. It's unquestionably a prehistoric calendar marking the Summer Solstice, which signaled the beginning of the rainy season, and some specific arrangement of stars in the night sky that enabled people to guide themselves across the surrounding wastelands.

The circle was only a little more than thirteen feet (four meters) across, but its measurements are very accurate. Two pairs of stones align to form a direct north/south line, while two others are situated in an east/west direction. The east/west line shows exactly where the Sun would have risen and set on the Summer Solstice 6,500 years ago.

Besides the calendar, however, other structures exist, some of which feature boulders that weigh several tons. How did they move them into place? No one knows for sure, but it would have required a lot of effort, planning, and organization. The people must have had a pretty good reason for going to all that trouble.

Some specialists claim to see arrangements that are aligned with Ursa Major, the Big Dipper, as it would have appeared in the night sky 6,500 years ago. Others make the argument that some of the stones correspond to the three stars of Orion's belt, a configuration that would later be built into the Giza Pyramid complex. Carbon dating points to this same 6,500-year era.

This is a recreation of the Calendar Circle, constructed at the Nubian Museum in Aswan, Egypt. As with similar megalithic structures, this much smaller circle of stones tracks the arrival of the solstices.

Still others see evidence of a connection with the constellation Cygnus, a constellation found reflected in megalithic structures around the world that is associated with the path a departed soul takes in its journey to the next life through the axis of the Milky Way. The stars Arcturus and Alpha Centauri have their supporters as well.

Thrown into this mix, however, is a dark side. Apparently, a religion developed that featured the sacrifice of cattle, indicating an all-too-familiar theme in human religious development. This may indicate an early example of Ancient Egypt's Hathor cult. Hathor was the god who served as the nighttime protector of people who lived in desert regions.

All this evidence, both astronomical and religious, has brought on the inevitable theory that Nabta Playa was a religious ceremonial center during the time period of roughly 6000–5600 B.C.E. This is similar to claims made about almost every megalithic structure from Göbekli Tepe to Stonehenge. It's a common conclusion that theorizes people gathering here at certain seasons to sacrifice animals as they prayed for blessings in the coming year.

Many more megalithic structures are yet to be uncovered at Nabta Playa, but enough work has already been done to indicate that a high cultural level of very sophisticated astronomy and highly organized civilization once thrived here. Who these people were and what motivated them to do the things they did are anyone's guess.

The fact that they were victims of climate change is obvious. Did other factors figure into their demise? Probably. We might never know for sure, but at Nabta Playa, we see yet another example of a people who thought their civilization would last forever. We cavalierly throw around numbers like "a thousand years went by" and never stop to think what that means. At least twenty-five to thirty generations of people lived during that time. If any of them dared raise any concerns about what the future might bring, they were undoubtedly told, "Don't worry so much. Things have always been this way. Better times are coming!"

Then came the end, though, and another civilization was buried beneath the sands of time.

THONIS: GATEWAY TO EGYPT

When it comes to Egypt, we don't have to journey twelve thousand years back in time to trip over a lost civilization. A mere three thousand or so will suffice.

A few miles off the present-day coastline of Aboukir Bay, underwater research conducted by the University of Oxford led to the remains of what used to be the gateway to Egypt. A thousand years before the birth of Christ, cargo from around the world was unloaded, inventoried, and taxed before being transferred to barges that would ship it upstream on the Nile River.

Most of that cargo undoubtedly came from civilizations known to us today, at least in story if not in stone, but some evidence points to far-flung trade networks that many Egyptologists today simply will not accept. The mummified remains of Henut Taui, for instance, a woman from the Egyptian ruling class, revealed traces of both coca and tobacco. Before the voyages of Columbus, these substances were grown only in the Americas. The results were checked again and again when experts assumed that the body must have somehow been contaminated after exhumation, but they were substantiated every time. How did coca and tobacco turn up in Egypt, probably entering the country through its principal ancient gateway city? Egypt had a close trading partnership with Phoenicia. Phoenician sailors, it was rumored, were sailing to the Americas. Traditionalists still usually handle the subject by pushing the facts aside and hoping the subject simply disappears, though.

These coins stamped with the face of Ptolemy I were discovered under the sea where the city of

Thonis (Heracleion) now lies off the coast of Egypt.

Historical rumors had long hinted at the existence of the gateway city the Egyptians called Thonis and the Greeks Heracleion, but until it was discovered in the year 2000 by the European Institute for Underwater Archaeology, no one was sure if those rumors were simply mythological in nature.

Now it appears that Thonis was a stop along the famous Silk Road that carried goods, ideas, and religion between the great civilizations anchored by China in the east and Rome in the west. Caravans loaded with wool, gold, and silver made their way east along the route, passing caravans of silk heading west, but with the trade goods came an even more important commodity. Soon after the turn of the millennium, China was exposed to Judaism and Christianity from Europe and Africa, along with Buddhism from India, and the West was, for the first time, exposed to eastern religious concepts that were quite different in nature from Western beliefs.

Apparently, all was not quiet on the Western front. Sixty-four Egyptian ships have been located that were deliberately sunk sometime between 800 and 200 B.C.E., apparently in an attempt to blockade the harbor. Even back then, war was a constant threat.

Of course, it could be that land reclamation was behind it all. No one knows for sure, but one thing the discovery highlights has ramifications for today. Thonis, existing as it does so far below current sea level, makes us wonder what will happen in a few hundred years to our own port cities if water levels continue to rise today as they did back then. Recovered evidence includes trade items of great value. Obviously, this was once a thriving civilization that was based on trade and commerce. The merchants no doubt thought their way of life would continue forever.

If this proves to be true and a remote city in southeast Turkey was indeed a Philistine base, it might answer a nagging question.

Then, just like that, it was over. The thriving port city became lost not only to archaeology but to memory, at least until the year 2000. How many

other such civilizations have been lost in similar fashion? How many millions of people who thought their way of life would continue forever have disappeared as well? Might the same thing happen to us someday? Only time will tell.

THE SEA PEOPLE

"They came from the sea in their warships and none could stand against them."

Aside from the fact that they rolled over Egypt and much of Anatolia, that's about all we know of them except for the quote above from the Egyptian Stele at Tanis. We don't know what they called themselves, where they came from, or who they were. Today, they are referred to only as the Sea People, but we know from archaeological evidence that their war technology was unstoppable and they reduced the Hittite Empire and the Levant to scattered chaos for generations, leaving only ruin and rubble in their wake.

Some claim they were Etruscan/Trojan invaders. Others say they were Italian, Mycenaean, or even Minoan. Still others say they were the remnants of the Atlantis navy, bent on reclaiming their lost heritage, but that last description doesn't fit with Atlantean chronology.

The best new evidence of their identity may point to the Philistines. Previous assumptions all stemmed from the idea that if folks are known as the Sea People, they must be from "the sea," but excavations from Tel Tayinat, ancient Kunulua, point to Turkey as their home. Philistine pottery has been found there in abundance, suggesting that this may have been a Philistine capital city or at least an important home base. Other artifacts lead to a possible connection with the history of conquest attributed to the Sea People. If this proves to be true and a remote city in southeast Turkey was indeed a Philistine base, it might answer a nagging question. The Philistines were present when many great civilizations collapsed. Somehow, they were exempt from a similar fate. Why? How did that happen? Might they have been more of a cause than an innocent bystander?

All these conjectures may not amount to much. The destructive Sea People of the Mediterranean are one of history's great mysteries. Even the name "Sea People" wasn't given to them until 1881 by a French Egyptologist named Gaston Maspero. He coined the term because the invaders came from

the sea or, in some cases, from “the islands.” He assumed that meant the Mediterranean Sea and Aegean Islands, but we don’t even know that for sure.

Most of what we do know comes from the Egyptian pharaoh Ramesses the Great (Ramesses II) and his two sons, but, as we shall soon see, he was also the founder, or at least the first great exponent of, fake news.

Early in his reign, the Hittites took control of Kadesh, a strategic trade center of modern-day Syria. Ramesses himself led his army there and claimed, in great detail, to have driven the Hittites, and their allies, who he called the Sea People, back home. In two written documents, both the “Official Record” and the victory “Poem of Pentaur,” named after the scribe of Papyrus Sallier III, he paints a picture of a resounding military triumph.

> The foreign countries conspired in their islands. All at once the lands were removed and scattered in the fray. No land could resist their arms—from Hatti, Kode, Carchemish, Arzawa, and Alashiya on—being cut off at one time. A camp was set up in Amurru. They desolated its people and its land was like that which had never existed. They were coming forward toward Egypt, while the flame was prepared for them. Their confederation was the Peleset, Tjeker, Shekelesh, Denen, and Weshesh, lands united. They laid their hands upon the lands as far as the circuit of the earth, their hearts were confident and trusting as they said “Our plans will succeed!”

His victory, however, wasn’t celebrated for long. An archive of letters found later at the Hittite stronghold of Hattusa reveals quite a different story. Written in Akkadian cuneiform, the international language of that day, they tell of Hattusili III, the Hittite commandeer, asking Ramesses why he was acting as though Kadesh was a victory even though the Egyptians had plainly been beaten.

Ramesses acknowledges that the battle had been a tough one, but it wasn’t his fault. “It was the hostility of a god, and he caused me problems,” he said. Therefore, he could claim victory because he wasn’t really involved with the outcome.

Ramesses the Great is shown here defeating the Hittites at the city of Dapur (reproduced from a mural at the temple in Thebes).

Ramesses was a great politician.

However, the letters are also important because they are some of the only records we have that describe the mysterious Sea People. If he is to be believed, and scholars are not sure he should be, Ramesses defeated these mysterious people in a sea battle near the mouth of the Nile River off the coasts of Egypt during the second year of his reign. This Egyptian victory, coupled with their "defeat" at Kadesh, should have, according to Ramesses, pretty much ended their reign of terror, but later historical events tell another story.

Ramesses's son Merneptah, after his succession to the throne, wrote that the Sea People allied themselves with the Libyans and then invaded Egypt. They came, according to his official records, "from the north." He even listed their homelands: "Ekwesh, Teresh, Lukka, Sherden, and Shekelesh." The trouble is, no one knows where these lands were.

Wherever they came from, though, they were formidable in battle. Like his father before him, however, Merneptah claimed a great victory and wrote about it on the famous Merneptah Stele in Thebes. The inscription reads like the political document that it is:

> The princes prostrate themselves, saying, "Peace!" Not one of Nine Bows dares raise his head; Tehenu is plundered while Hatti is peaceful, Cannan is seized by every evil, Ashkelon is carried off and Gezer is seized, Yenoam is made as that which never existed,

> Israel is wasted without seed, Khor is made a widow of Egypt. All the lands are at peace. Everyone who travels has been subdued by the King of Upper and Lower Egypt.

Like father, like son, however. Merneptah died claiming complete victory. History would again prove otherwise.

Next in line for the Egyptian throne was Ramesses III. During his reign, the Sea People returned and again began a serious invasion of Egypt. They first destroyed Kadesh. Then, they used a tactic later perfected by Viking raiders off the British Isles. They conducted lightning strikes along the coasts before heading right for the Delta region, the heartland of Egypt.

Here it seems as though they were finally pushed back, but the military budget that was needed to accomplish the job depleted the Egyptian treasury so much that tomb builders could not be paid. This led to the first known labor strike in history. The workers simply walked off the job and refused to return without a new contract.

Thus, the legacy of the mysterious Sea People continued to wreak havoc among Mediterranean nations. For a hundred years, they were the most feared raiders in the region, but we still don't know who they were or where they came from.

Marc van de Mieroop in his authoritative book *A History of Ancient Egypt* writes:

> Both Merneptah and Ramesses III present [the attacks] as sudden events, unforeseen and with massive numbers of people involved. Ramesses III's reliefs even show carts loaded with women, children, and household goods, as if a population movement was involved. His account of the Sea Peoples' appearance in the north of the eastern Mediterranean suggests that it was unexpected, very sudden, and highly destructive. But Merneptah had reported occurrences of the same type thirty years earlier. Nor were the names of the members of the Sea Peoples new in the Egyptian record.

He goes on to say that the identity of the mysterious Sea People might never be known. He just may be right.

TAMANA

Before his death in 2006, Dr. Vamos-Toth Bator was a researcher in Hawaii. His contribution to ancient, lost civilizations was that he compiled a list of more than one million place names around the world that, in his opinion, indicated proof of a universal civilization, global in scope, at one time that was then wiped out by a universal deluge.

From Hungary to Africa, from Bolivia to New Guinea, from the Carpathian Basin to ancient Egypt and China, he believed that identical place names could only have come about because an ancient civilization spanned the entire world. He called it Tamana because this was the name employed by his hypothesized civilization whenever they founded a new colonial city. It means “stronghold.”

The name Tamana is found in twenty-four countries around the world, but Bator was convinced that it began in what is now the Sahara region of Africa. He believes that a universal deluge destroyed the entire worldwide culture, making it another card-carrying member of the Atlantis tradition.

According to his research, the Tamana people belonged to the Maa, or “Fish,” confederation. That civilization included the Magyars, Egyptians, Elamites, Afro-Asiatic speakers, and Dravidians among others. “Maa” refers either to Noah, who they considered to be their ancestor, or to a god worshipped by ancient mariners.

Because most of his evidence was only linguistic in nature, Dr. Vamos-Toth Bator’s theories have not been extensively accepted by academics, but those who study the development of words across language spectrums find his work compelling. They include toponyms, which are place names derived from topographical features. “Sand,” “water,” “ponds,” and “lakes” are all featured in his research.

Similarities found in different languages certainly offer food for thought.

INDONESIA AND AUSTRALIA

GUNUNG PADANG: IN THE BEGINNING

If things keep happening as they have in recent years, the twenty-first century might someday be called the “Century of Indonesia.”

It began in 2003 with the discovery of a previously unknown human species called *Homo floresiensis*. They were almost immediately named “Hobbits” because of their small stature. It now appears that this species survived for thousands of years after both Neanderthals and Denisovans either became extinct or were assimilated by our species. *Homo floresiensis* survived until about twelve thousand years ago. Once again, we come across the familiar date linked to the worldwide cataclysm that brought about the end of the Younger Dryas Ice Age. That was the event that caused devastation and rapid flooding all over the world. It turned Indonesia into islands rather than a single landmass.

Indonesia made the headlines again in 2014. The October issue of

Nature magazine featured an article about the discovery of sophisticated cave paintings on the island of Sulawesi. They appear to be close to forty thousand years old. That's at least as old, and possibly even older, than the famous cave paintings of Europe. Such art is referred to as symbolic representation. It probably led to the beginning of what we now call religion.

The December 3, 2014, edition of *Smithsonian* magazine announced the discovery of the "bones of what appeared to be an ancient human, surrounded by animal remains and shells decorated with geometric engravings." This happened on the Indonesian island of Java and indicates modern cognition and behavior. The engravings represent the earliest evidence of such decorative marks and also the first known use of shells to make tools.

Here's the significance, however. These engravings were dated to five hundred thousand years ago! That's at least three hundred thousand years *before* "modern" humans were supposed to have evolved. Dates are often pushed back a thousand years or so—sometimes even more—but a discovery that suggests that humans evolved that early was simply, up until now, unheard of.

With that as an introduction, we can look at an archaeological find that has so many experts upset that they seem to be scrambling all over each other to post sarcastic, sometimes even vicious, articles on the Internet. It's an Indonesian site called Gunung Padang, and if the archaeological dates hold up, as they certainly seem to be doing so far, they make Göbekli Tepe seem almost modern. Indeed, if this find eventually passes peer review, it will be the first discovery of a civilization that wasn't built by the *survivors* of the Younger Dryas comet catastrophe. It would have built thirteen thousand years *before the event itself*! In other words, this could be evidence of an Ice Age, technologically proficient, and sophisticated civilization that perhaps taught our own ancestors how to build and thrive.

In 2011, Dr. Danny Hilman Natawidjaja first noticed something different about a mountain called Gunung Padang, the "Mountain of Enlightenment." Up until then, most folks thought it was just a natural Earth feature known to have some 2,500-year-old ruins on the top, but Dr. Natawidjaja suspected that it was, in fact, a human-built pyramid. During subsequent archaeological work involving ground-penetrating radar, he uncovered evidence of chambers buried deep within the structure. When these chambers were penetrated with drills, they brought up evidence that

was carbon dated to twentysix thousand years ago. If those dates are substantiated, as they so far have been every time they have been tested, underneath this artificial mountain lies the ruins of the oldest human-built civilization ever discovered on Earth.

Gunung Padang in present day West Java, Indonesia, is the largest megalithic site in all of Southeast Asia. It is incredibly ancient, with some estimating it as 20,000 to 25,000 years old!

It will be, arguably, the single most astounding find ever recorded by an archaeologist and will force the complete rethinking of everything we know about human history and civilization. Nothing else comes close. It is 14,500 years older than Göbekli Tepe. It had stood for more than twenty thousand years by the time Stonehenge was built. It predates the traditional date for the Pyramids by more than seventeen thousand years, probably a lot more.

Evidence suggests that the builders employed a form of cement made of a mixture of clay, iron, and silica to bind rock together. If this is so, it is proof that iron was being smelted and used some eighteen thousand years before the Iron Age.

If Dr. Natawidjaja expected such a discovery to be welcomed with open arms, he was sadly mistaken. Traditionalists are a suspicious lot. Infighting began right away. The only ones who listened and advertised the findings

were men such as Graham Hancock and Andrew Collins, who are, at best, patronized by the academic establishment and, at worst, ridiculed. It doesn't help their standing in the community when they are often proved right, but they are the ones who have a large enough audience to get these finds announced in the popular press before the academics can bury the information in the halls of the conspiracy of silence.

The tragedy is that the fight has caused the delay of funds, time, publicity, and resources needed to get to the bottom of the dig. Now, however, the Indonesian government seems to have discovered that tourist dollars will finally prevail and help the project get the attention it deserves. People are flocking to the site. They never would have done so, and brought about a political change of heart, if so-called "alternative history" folks had not generated sufficient enthusiasm.

Obviously, mainstream archaeology isn't at all happy with the situation. The findings are simply too radical for the traditionalists. They don't fit into the story we have all been told and taught. It's a sad situation, but if the history of science teaches us anything, it is that radical ideas are never accepted right away. These things take time.

As a result, very influential voices from the ranks of Indonesian archaeologists have gone on record with claims that Gunung Padang is simply a naturally occurring, extinct volcano. The so-called "chambers" located by underground radar are hollow lava tubes. Ancient carbon-dating dates are the result of old lava flows.

Dr. Natawidjaja, however, begs to differ, and his claims have stood up to some very rigorous checks and balances. He has generated a healthy cash flow to the local economy due to all the tourists he has attracted. He's standing by his claims and has received some very impressive support.

As it turns out, human beings might not have simply built Gunung Padang, they may have even generated electricity.

A central claim of traditional archaeology is that civilization didn't begin until after the last Ice Age, which was about 11,600 years ago at the

very earliest. Even that date was only recently and reluctantly accepted a few years ago, replacing the consensus that Mesopotamia produced the first civilization, so if dates attributed to Göbekli Tepe took a long time to be accepted, Gunung Padang will probably have to pay its academic dues. It seems to be built into the professional psyche that human beings, if they existed at all that long ago, were uncultured, primitive hunter–gatherers. They could never have built something this sophisticated!

However, each new day seems to bring more discoveries, and if discoveries brought about by carbon dating were big news, the greatest was yet to come. As it turns out, human beings might not have simply built Gunung Padang, they may have even generated electricity.

This claim is so outlandish that the so-called "serious" news outlets have skirted around it, while a number of online sites have broadcast it to the world. Take this excerpt, for instance, from a site called *www.mysteriousearth.net*:

> Dr. Danny Hilman [Natawidjaja] is responsible for the archaeological team conducting research on the site and they have recently announced the discovery of an oddly shaped metal device that is presumed to be the world's oldest electrical device. According to researchers, this object is made out of gold and copper and seems to resemble a primitive electrical capacitor. According to some researchers, this newly found device seems very similar in structure to the biblical descriptions of the Ark of the Covenant. Carbon dating confirms the device to be 2,500 years older than the Ark of the Covenant.
>
> The discovery of the electrical device at Gunung Padang is getting a lot of attention. Even President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia visited the site, congratulating the researchers on their discovery and declaring that he has great interest in the results of the research.
>
> "The findings on the Gunung Padang site will shock the world," said the president's special staffer for social aid and natural disasters, Andi Arief.

Can we trust a Facebook site for archaeological information? Of course not—but I've been interviewed by trustworthy radio hosts who have, in turn, talked to me about their interviews with Dr. Danny Hilman Natawidjaja.

They are unanimous in insisting that he's the real deal. Like all good stories, enough smoke is being generated to indicate the presence of at least a little fire underneath.

Conspiracy theories abound. We can imagine, for instance, such a device making its way over to Egypt, thereby resolving one of the most intriguing questions that has never been sufficiently answered about the building of the Pyramids: "Given the absence of any kind of soot on the ceilings of interior passages, how did they provide light for the workers?"

Biblical writers remind us that when Moses stood before Pharaoh and uttered his famous command "Let my people go!," Pharaoh was, at first, only too glad to oblige. Later, for no apparent reason provided by the Exodus account, he entered into hot pursuit with his whole cavalry, eventually being drowned by the waters of the Red Sea after Moses and the Israelites passed through on dry land.

What happened to change his mind so abruptly? Could it be that Pharaoh learned that Moses was escaping with a technological device that the Egyptians had inherited from ancient people of Indonesia but, after the passage of centuries, had forgotten how to manufacture on their own? In other words, was Moses stealing the only prototype?

What might that device have been called?

Well, possibly it was what we call the mysterious Ark of the Covenant.

The theory goes like this: Moses enjoyed privileged status during the forty years he was raised in the household of the pharaoh. Presumably, he would have learned about such a valuable treasure that could produce light in the darkness. It would certainly go a long way toward explaining all the weird power surges and special effects linked to the ancient, mysterious object that so confounded Indiana Jones in *Raiders of the Lost Ark.*

Such speculations are a lot of fun. Do they contain any truth? Probably not, but theories such as this one tie up a lot of loose ends. Rather than simply scoffing at them, scientists might be better off if they answer and make public the loose ends. So far, however, they have not.

An old story exists about some sermon notes that an old country preacher left on the pulpit one morning. Written in the margin at one point was the following notation: "Argument weak here. Pound the pulpit and get angry!"

So far, the academic community seems to be doing a lot of pounding on the popular pulpit. Maybe it's time instead to strengthen the argument. Obviously, a lot more work has to be done.

AUSTRALIA'S UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY

It has long been known that Indigenous Australians were an ancient civilization. Archeologists, however, were faced with a problem. If ancient people got to Australia, they must have used boats. That's a technology that experts didn't want to push too far back in time. It would make possible too many instances of cultural diffusion, and that's not a popular word in the vocabulary of traditionalists. When a people inhabit a new land, most anthropologists want them to walk there on their own two feet.

But persistence pays off. DNA evidence is the new coinage of the scientific realm. If DNA says something is true, anthropologists tend to believe it. And new DNA evidence now suggests that the first people who reached Australia arrived there at least 50,000 years ago—and probably closer to 60,000 years. It's an uncomfortable truth, but there it is. They arrived by boat.

Scientists are now able to trace the remarkable journeys made by ancient humans. They do it by sifting through clues left in the DNA of modern populations in Australia and Papua New Guinea. The analysis shows that their ancestors were probably the first humans to cross an ocean, and it reveals evidence of prehistoric physical connections with an unknown hominin cousin that was probably Denisovan.

Now the tale takes a strange turn. In 2013, a story appeared in a supposed satirical website that a pre-colonial city near the sandstone rock formation of Uluru (Ayer's Rock) containing 287 tombs and artifacts suggested that an entire ancient empire that until recently was never even suspected to have existed was not just a token empire. It talked about a population of between 20,000 and 30,000 inhabitants, which would have made it the most important center of civilization in the South Pacific. And it lasted for between four and five hundred years, right up until the ninth century C.E.

A lot of people bought it. No one imagined that people as sick as these hoaxers could have posted such a story. What was the point? It certainly

wasn’t funny.

Professor Eske Willerslev, an evolutionary geneticist at the University of Copenhagen, wss said to have picked it up and announced the findings that appeared in a 2016 article in the journal *Nature*, a very reputable archeology magazine:

> This story has been missing for a long time in science. Now we know their relatives are the guys who were the first real human explorers. Our ancestors were sitting being kind of scared of the world while they set out on this exceptional journey across Asia and across the sea.

The site that caused all the excitement is a very popular tourist spot. The images supposedly revealed all sorts of right angles and geographic figures that don’t usually occur naturally. Follow-up work on the ground was said to have started in May 2014. It soon began to unearth structures inevitably labeled temples and “royal palaces,” along with workshops, large rainwater reservoirs, and houses.

Eske Willerslev (at left) is a Danish evolutionary geneticist who specializes in molecular anthropology, palaeontology, and ecology. He has maintained that Indigenous peoples in Australia explored the world long before Europeans.

But despite the cruel trick this was said to have been, the most fascinating aspects of the find were real. They consisted of artifacts and DNA studies that revealed individuals from various points of origin throughout the Pacific Islands and Southeast Asia. You can fake ground-penetrating radar photographs; you can't fake DNA studies. That means ancient Australians were traveling there for some reason, probably involving trade routes. Those two facts, when connected with gold mining operations that were carried out in southern Australia, painted quite a picture. It appears that gold was mined in Australia, and people from around the Pacific from as far away as New Zealand, Indonesia, Malaysia, China, and India traveled there with trade goods to sell in order to get it.

So much for the "primitive" Australian aborigine story we've been fed. Another myth bites the dust, despite the best efforts of modern-day hoaxers.

What made the civilization, no matter how many people lived here, deteriorate into the dust bins of history? Probably climate change. A dramatic decrease in rainfall in the ninth century would have soon made life in the city unsustainable. Another lost civilization was the result.

But there may be even more to the already mysterious story. As a matter of fact, the ninth-century civilization may be only the tip of the iceberg.

Easter Island has long been the suggested remains of the lost continent called Mu, Lemuria, or an antediluvian land mass called "Uru" or "The Great Westland." The Maori people located it to the west of New Zealand. They claimed it was once inhabited by an ancient race of people who built with stone and were expert astronomers. It was from these people, claim the Maori, that they were descended.

And they weren't the only civilization to preserve these memories in their oral history. The Chinese wrote of a "land to the south" and even included it on 2,500-year-old maps. They called it "Locack." Some of these maps show a rough depiction very similar to the outlines of the Australian continent. Locack was supposed to be rich in resources, especially gold. Its inhabitants were considered to be pagan idolaters, but they were excellent astronomers and built great structures of stone.

This causes problems when it comes to reconciling these accounts with

conventional Australian history. As far as anyone knew until quite recently, Aborigines never rose above stone age culture. They carved petroglyphs and pecked out some wonderful rock art, but that was about it.

They did, however, have memories of what they called “heroes” and of worship of a supreme being called Biame. The heroes came to Australia in faroff times from across the sea in boats. Some of their western cave art even illustrated these boats, which were crewed by visitors called the Wandjina.

Australian Aborigines tell of the Wandjina people, who came from far away and dressed in a style reminiscent of Egypt. Rock art like this near Elizabeth Station, Western Australia, dates to about four thousand years ago and honors the Wandjina as gods.

These Wandjina are often pictured wearing clothes that seem to be Egyptian in nature. This, of course, would seem absurd, were it not for Australian DNA results that record Middle East blood groups.

To make matters even more interesting, in 2019 DNA specialists determined that Australian DNA evidence shows up as a strong signal in groups indigenous to the South American Amazon region. How could ancient

Australian DNA evidence wind up in South America unless there was ancient contact between the two peoples?

There is even linguistic evidence. Certain Egyptian words are found in traditional Aborigine languages, and oral history tells of Wandjina people "carving out the mountains and hills," either to build cities, mine gold, or perhaps both.

Who these people were is still a mystery. It might even have prompted some very sick hoaxers to plant a false story that threatened their ideology. But the fact that ancient memories remained a part of Australian oral history would seem to indicate that a pre-Aborigine people—or at least a founding culture— developed a civilization now lost to memory but was recalled by peoples of the Southern Pacific Ocean. They were close observers of the night sky, they erected sacred stones and other structures, and they were an advanced race of people.

They may even have taught ancient Chinese astronomers. Chinese records tell of navigators undergoing sea voyages southward to learn more about the science of the stars. Even people as far away as the Inca of Peru and the Maya of Central America knew about a land they called Uru. Apparently, trading networks were much more advanced in ancient times than most people are willing to admit.

Two great Easter Island-type stone heads have recently been found in Emerald, in the far north Queensland Territory, and submerged in the Whitsunday Passage. An enormous stone head similar to those found in Mayan ruins was dug up just south of Sydney. When Thor Heyerdahl suggested that Peruvian rafts may have sailed the Pacific, even he might have underestimated what such vessels could accomplish. He might also have underestimated their antiquity.

Trade moves in two directions. A Peruvian civilization high in the Andes call themselves the Uru. They are a fair-skinned people whose oral history recalls their ancient ancestors coming from across the western ocean, where a great continent once existed. Could this be the basis of human skeletons found in both Peru and the Yucatán Peninsula that are thousands of years old and yet are identified as demonstrating similar physical traits as those of Australian people? What were Australians doing in Central and South America?

To add to the mystery, remains of walls and structures have been found

beneath the ocean surface in Queensland, constructed of triangular-shaped bricks with substantial mortar. Similar enigmas have been found in New Guinea, leading some scientists to think that a great civilization with extensive trade networks might have once existed way back before historic times.

Old legends maintain that a land bridge once linked Australia to the mainland, but if those stories are true, geological timelines suggest an almost unheard-of age. If a civilization once thrived on such a land bridge, it would be old indeed. Recent discoveries of human footprints preserved in mud are dated to at least 25,000 years ago. One set was of a sandal print. Who in Australia would have been wearing sandals 25,000 years ago? These discoveries correspond in time to rock engravings that have been dated to this same era.

And then there are the pyramids. Temple-like structures built of large stones are so far outside the parameters of the traditional Australian story that most archeologists insist they are natural formations. But they are there beneath the waves in Torres Strait, Queensland, and New South Wales. Can we simply dismiss these finds as the work of early Egyptian travelers who wanted to leave their mark on the landscape?

Stone eagles and serpents, mysterious megaliths, strange stories from a distant past—all these enigmas work together to suggest that there is much about the ancient Australian past that has been, for the most part, neglected. Perhaps it is time to listen again to the forgotten voices of those who seem to be crying out to anyone who will listen with open ears and fresh imaginations. They are our predecessors. They once were as we are now, thinking their civilization would last forever.

We owe it to them to seek out whatever evidence they might have left behind. And we owe it to ourselves to discover where we came from. Our forgotten past may very well rest “down under” in Australia.

INDIA AND PAKISTAN

KUMARI KANDAM: ANCIENT TEXTS AND FORGOTTEN CIVILIZATIONS OF INDIA

The oldest civilization in India is thought to be the Indus Valley civilization, but was it?

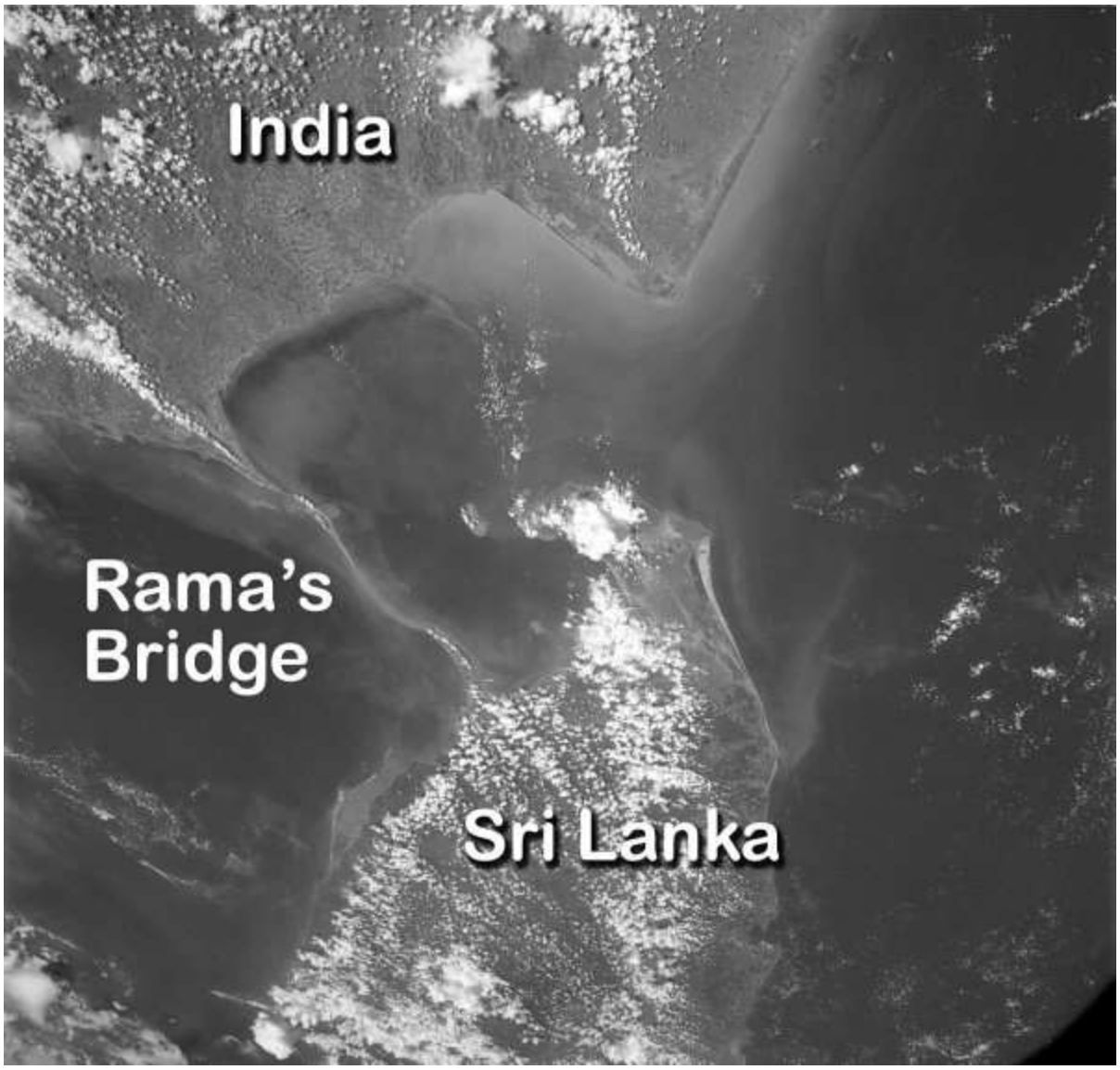
In 2016, researchers carbon dated animal and pottery remains of the original settlements there and pushed the dates back some 2,500 years to about eight thousand years ago.

However, off the coast of northwestern India, the sea levels are now higher by some 200 feet (60 meters) than they were ten thousand years ago. What appears to be underwater human construction at Poompuhar at the 75-foot (23-meter) level might push civilization there back even further.

This comes as no surprise to scholars who take ancient texts seriously because traditions in India retain legends about an underwater continent in

the Indian Ocean that was submerged a long, long time ago as ocean levels suddenly rose. The lost civilization that fell beneath the waves was called Kumari Kandam. It was rumored to have been an advanced culture that even featured an “academy” that taught advanced philosophy and literature.

The name Kumari Kandam first appeared in the fifteenth century in the Tamil nationalist version of a text called the *Skanda Puranam*, but legends about an ancient, submerged continent beneath the Indian Ocean appeared even earlier. The land was said to have been ruled by Pandiyan kings. During the British colonial period in India, stories about the lost continent of Lemuria were common, and Kumari Kandam was quickly identified as the source of the stories. Nationalistic pride probably entered the picture as well because it was thought that this might be the source—the cradle of civilization from where people eventually spread out across the globe. If this is true, the Tamil people who were thought to have lived on the sunken continent would have the honor of being the oldest civilized people in the world. If the Tamil language proves to be older than Sanskrit, now considered to be the foundation language of ancient India, it would then be a candidate for the mother tongue of all languages.



As seen in this photo taken by crew on the space shuttle Endeavor, Rama's Bridge (also known as Adam's Bridge) gives the impression of an artificial construction linking India and Sri Lanka.

Given the sea level rise in the last ten thousand years, it is entirely possible that a land bridge once joined Sri Lanka to mainland India. A limestone shoal called Rama's Bridge, made up of sand, small pebbles, and silt, extends some eighteen miles (twenty-nine kilometers) from India to Sri Lanka. Once thought to be a natural formation, some recent NASA satellite pictures now seem to indicate that it could very well be the remnants of a broken bridge under the ocean surface, perhaps built as sea levels gradually rose, threatening to break the connection between the two landmasses. The *Ramayana* texts tell the story of Sita, Rama's wife, being held captive on the island of Lanka. Rama commissioned a massive building project so his army

of Vanara, or ape men, could march across and rescue her.

Was this a remnant of that bridge?

No one knows for sure.

HARAPPA VERSUS MOHENJO-DARO: TO THE DEATH?

During the archaeological seasons of 1921 and 1922, the Archaeological Survey of India announced the discovery of a previously unknown civilization that encompassed northwest India, Pakistan, parts of Afghanistan, and Iran. Much of it is now underwater because it was built when ocean levels were as much as 400 feet (122 meters) lower than today. That pushes its dates way back into history by at least eleven thousand years. The chief cities of the region were Harappa and Mohenjo-daro. Since Harappa was excavated first, the whole civilization was named the Harappan civilization, or the Indus Valley civilization. According to traditional archaeologists, the golden age of the civilization existed from 2600 to 1900 B.C.E.

Notice the words “traditional archaeologists.” They are about to figure prominently in this story.

The name Mohenjo-daro means “mound of the dead.” It was once the largest—and arguably most important—site of the Harappan civilization. The name comes from the fact that this ancient and mysterious city seems to have been leveled almost instantly by some kind of tremendous explosion that occurred four thousand years go. What was once a thriving metropolis that rivaled dynastic Egypt, was home to between forty thousand and one hundred thousand citizens, and featured an extremely sophisticated infrastructure including brick bathrooms with toilets and sewers made of covered, stone slabs. It was suddenly reduced to rubble. Artifacts melted together under intense heat and then quickly cooled, fusing them together.

Was the city struck by an asteroid? That seemed to be the only explanation. What else could have caused such an explosion that long ago? David Davenport, a British researcher who studied the ruins for more than twelve years, said the only contemporary event that came close to matching what he found at Mohenjo-daro was the destruction of Nagasaki, which ended World War II.

Wait a minute! Nagasaki was destroyed by an atomic bomb. Could the

destruction of this ancient city have been the result of something akin to a modern atomic device?

Ancient alien theorists immediately responded with a resounding yes. The epicenter of the blast in which everything was crystallized or fused together is about 50 yards (45.72 meters) wide. Moving out from this area, evidence of melted brick has been found. It certainly seems like some sort of blast took place. Unconfirmed reports have even come out of a layer of radioactive ash that was broadcast out from the epicenter and a human skeleton being uncovered that showed clear evidence of extremely high levels of radioactivity.

The words of the *Bhagavad Gita*, a foundational Hindu religious text from India, come to mind: "Now I am become Death, the Destroyer of worlds." Although no one knows who wrote those words, they are estimated to have been recorded somewhere between 400 B.C.E. and 200 C.E. They were famously quoted by J. Robert Oppenheimer, one of the architects of the atomic bomb, when scientists in New Mexico first saw the devastation they were now capable of producing. When asked about whether the bomb produced by the members of the Manhattan Project was the first ever to be exploded, he replied, "Yes—in modern times."

A swimming pool is one of several interesting features to be found at Mohenjo-daro, a civilization destroyed around 1900 B.C.E. in a cataclysmic event that some have speculated bears a resemblance to a nuclear attack.

Another ancient Hindu text, the *Mahabharata*, captures the essence of the discovery quite well in its description of a mysterious weapon of war called an Agneya:

> White hot smoke that was a thousand times brighter than the sun rose in infinite brilliance and reduced the city to ashes. Water boiled … horses and war chariots were burned by the thousands … the corpses of the fallen were mutilated by the terrible heat so that they no longer looked like human beings.

Earlier, we warned that the words "traditional archaeologists" were going to become very important. Here's why. The traditional approach to the story of ancient India is that for a lot of technical reasons, mostly concerning what was traditionally called the "Indo-European" language of Sanskrit, it was thought that the original population of India, dark-skinned Aboriginal and Dravidian (people from southern India) tribes consisting of Stone Age primitives, was "invaded" by a light-skinned, blue-eyed "Aryan" race sometime during the second millennium B.C.E. The invaders were thought to

have entered the Indian subcontinent from the northwest through the famous Khyber Pass, bringing with them a "superior" European language that, when mixed together with the local tongue, produced the foundational language called Sanskrit. This was the language of the ancient texts known today as the Vedas, followed later by the Upanishads.

The "Aryan Invasion" theory proposed a sudden up-shift of intellectual and biological sophistication, but it now appears that no "Aryan Invasion" ever occurred or even any existence of an "Aryan" race, at least not in the sense European professors once taught. What had happened was that the Sanskrit word *Aryas* was misinterpreted. It was only European prejudice that assumed the original people of India were too primitive to have built the sophisticated civilizations unearthed by archaeologists.

What this meant was that the old-school method of dating the earliest and possibly most poetic religious texts in the world, the Vedas, was obsolete. If the Vedas were written after an "Aryan Invasion" that took place in the second millennium B.C.E., they couldn't be older than some 3,500 years, but if the assumed "invasion" never took place, if Sanskrit was developed by the people of the Indus Valley who had been there for millennia, anything was possible. The Vedas might be 3,500 years old, or they might be 30,500 years old. It was not possible to be certain.

New revelations demand new study, and when that study was instigated, an epic story emerged. It was a story of catastrophes, floods, and fire, with new civilizations arising out of the ashes of what had come before.

During the years that Davenport conducted his research, his training quite naturally caused him to conclude that Mohenjo-daro was destroyed in a great battle between the Aryans and the Dravidian natives. No possibility of extraterrestrial forces and technologies at work were even to be considered.

Of course, if you do take such things into account, any number of possibilities come into play, all of which, of course, are rejected out of hand by traditional archaeologists who cannot, by their very education, consider any other possibility, especially if that possibility might include any kind of ancient warfare involving atomic weapons.

ew revelations demand new study, and when that study was

instigated, an epic story emerged. It was a story of catastrophes, floods, and fire, with new civilizations arising out of the ashes of what had come before.

How could such extreme temperatures be generated by the technology of that time, though? It seems impossible, so any references in ancient texts, no matter how vivid and accurate they might seem, couldn't possibly be considered. The result was the publication of article after article deriding any reference to anything else but naturally occurring events that fit the traditionally accepted story.

Some experts such as William Sturm and Professor Antonio Castellani, who was a space engineer, remained true to the facts, finding evidence that "the melting of bricks at Mohenjo-daro could not have been caused by a normal fire" and "it's possible that what happened at Mohenjo-daro was not a natural phenomenon," but by and large, traditional archaeologists have chosen to view the site through the lenses of tradition while ignoring both the texts and the evidence as being apples and oranges, existing in two separate areas of study.

Therefore, the texts may record such things as Vimanas, or flying chariots, that rained destruction from on high, one group siding with the Harappans and the other defending Mohenjo-daro, but that is to be considered allegorical material and has nothing to do with the historical destruction of an ancient city. To say anything otherwise is to court scorn from the experts.

It's true that the ancient alien folks are often prone to speculate beyond the facts. They talk about aliens who are mining Earth's resources and fighting over rights of possession to the detriment of those who lived in Mohenjo-daro or Harappa. Although such claims might be logical, few facts support them, but just because people speculate and attempt to enter the minds of the ancients, which is a purely human thing to do, doesn't mean that the evidence on the ground should be ignored. That's a pretty shortsighted approach at best.

Once again, we are faced with different people, who have different belief systems, looking at history through their own prejudiced lenses. It's a sad state of affairs.

Something happened at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa that brought about the end of a thriving civilization. We don’t know what it was, but it was catastrophic and sudden. Neither romantic nor academic prejudice will solve the riddle. Only careful research can do that.

Meanwhile, the questions remain unsolved, and another chapter of our past remains hidden from us.

CRETE AND GREECE

MINOANS OF CRETE

When it comes to catastrophic, civilization-ending calamities, none is more famous, and more researched, than the death throes of the Minoans, which is possibly due to the destruction of a tiny Aegean island called Santorini, occurring when a huge volcanic eruption and subsequent tsunami flooded much of the island-rich region surrounding Crete. It happened about 3,500 years ago and has been blamed for everything from the end of the Atlantis civilization to the parting of the Red Sea during the time of Moses.

Homer wrote about Crete in the *Odyssey*. He spoke with rapture about an island that was situated “out in the wine-dark sea.” He described it as being “a rich and lovely sea-girt land, densely peopled, with 90 cities and several different languages.”

How much of his words were hyperbole we’ll never know, but undoubtedly, until it was destroyed in a single tragic day, it was home to one

of the oldest, if not the oldest, civilizations in Europe. By sea, it was only about 400 nautical miles (645 kilometers) northwest of Alexandria in Egypt and had been inhabited since at least nine thousand years ago. Even after its destruction, its glory lived on in art and architecture that was later inherited by the Mycenaean Greeks.

Much of the mythology generated by the Minoan civilization centered around King Minos, who was said to be the son of the god Zeus and Europa, a mortal Phoenician princess. Zeus, the god of thunder, had charmed Europa by turning himself into a gentle, white bull. When Europa climbed on his back, he took her off to Crete, where she would later become one of his many mistresses and bear him children. One of those offspring was Minos, and throughout his life, Zeus would serve as his principal advisor.

Following in the seafaring tradition of his Phoenician mother with the help of his father, Zeus, Minos built up a strong navy that eventually defeated Athens, a rival Greek city that was just beginning to offer competition. This gave him, in effect, a stronghold from which to dominate the wealth of Mediterranean trade.

Crete was the home of the famous labyrinth, where the fearsome Minotaur, a half-man, half-bull creature, was kept. Long after Crete ceased to exist, the Greeks still wrote stories about how Athenian youth were sent there to be sacrificed. According to legend, it was only through the ingenuity of Theseus that the custom was eventually thwarted. Theseus managed to find his way in and out of the labyrinth by unrolling a ball of thread behind him. Thus, he was able to kill the Minotaur with the sword of Aegeus and make it home to safety.

Minos was, of course, a mythological figure, but Thucydides, who lived during the golden years of Greek history, wrote about him as if he really existed. Thucydides believed Minos to be “the first to whom tradition ascribes the possession of a navy.” Given that Minos is called both a conqueror and a historical figure who united a great civilization that spanned some thirty islands and sought “as far as he was able, to clear the sea of pirates,” is it possible that the mythical figure of Minos might have been based on a real person? Thucydides used the term “thalassocracy” to describe Minoan civilization. “Thalassa” in Greek means sea. “Kratos” means power. In other words, Minoa was thought to be a sea power. The same attributes were credited to the Phoenicians of the Levant, who some scholars believe to

be the mysterious Sea People who terrorized the Mediterranean for centuries. It's useful to remember at this point that Crete was thought to be founded by a Phoenician princess and an early Greek god. Was this a coincidence? Maybe, but it makes us pause to speculate a little.

This fresco uncovered at Knossos in Crete depicts the popular Minoan sport of bull leaping in which an athlete vaults over a charging bull. The bull was a symbol of power in the Minoan culture.

Some concede that Plato made a mistake or two but are still willing to accept the literal truth of a real Atlantis civilization.

The story of Atlantis as originally relayed by Plato told about a seafaring, island-dwelling, sophisticated civilization that was destroyed over the course of only a single day and night. This is, quite literally, what seems to have happened to the Minoan civilization after the volcanic eruption on the island of Santorini. Could this event be the basis for the Atlantis tradition?

Two very severe problems need to be overcome before drawing this conclusion.

First of all, the date is wrong. The story that came down to Plato from

Solon mentions very specifically that the fall of Atlantis took place 11,500 years ago. That means that Santorini missed the honor of being Plato's Atlantis by at least eight thousand years. Some take refuge in the idea that Plato was talking about moon-calculated years instead of Sun-based ones, but the explanation sounds more like trying to justify a preconceived theory than attempting to really get to the bottom of the issue.

Second, the place is wrong. Plato put Atlantis "outside the gates of Hercules," now called the Straits of Gibraltar, in the Atlantic Ocean. The Minoan civilization was in the Aegean Sea.

Some concede that Plato made a mistake or two but are still willing to accept the literal truth of a real Atlantis civilization. Others counter that he was so scrupulous about everything else that it just wasn't in his character to confuse dates and places.

It has been argued that the parting of the Red Sea during the time of Moses was caused by an outflow and subsequent inflow of floodwaters at just the time the Israelites were getting set to escape from Egypt while being pursued by the war chariots of Pharaoh's army. This would make the Exodus miracle one of timing rather than a physical act of God.

This, too, is highly speculative, though. Problems are encountered while working out the geological mechanics of such an occurrence given the distance between Santorini and the Red Sea.

Therefore, once again, when studying an ancient, lost civilization, we are forced to enter that strange no-man's land that marks the boundary between myth, legend, and history. Where does one end and the next begin?

We might jump to the conclusion that any story that places a Phoenician princess on the back of a white bull—really a Greek god in disguise— must be legend, but leaving the obvious allegorical content behind, could the story be an augmented version of something that really happened? In other words, could Europa have been a historical princess from Phoenicia who married a Minoan king in order to establish an alliance that would enable a strategic, geographical beachhead benefiting existing Phoenician trade routes? This could very well have been the historical fact around which the foundation myths of a civilization grew.

Recent DNA research that supports this theory has uncovered European links to early Crete populations. Phoenicia had long been in the process of

establishing bases along both the great river systems of Europe and strategic Mediterranean ports. Those outposts would have served as a natural base of operations to extend their influence out into the Aegean Sea.

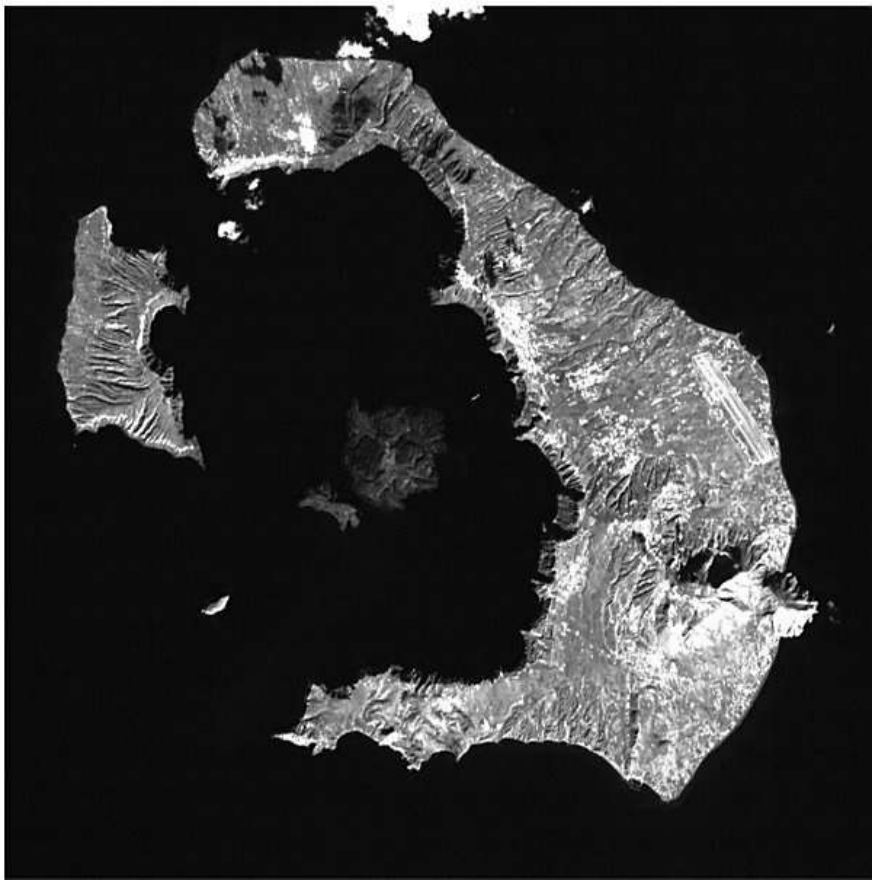
However we choose to look at it, a very sophisticated, Bronze Age civilization undoubtedly existed in Crete beginning around 7000 B.C.E. When British archaeologist Arthur Evans began excavations more than a century ago, he named it Minoan after the story of King Minos. The people of that time built large palaces such as the great palace of Knossos and established trade networks to import copper and tin, the materials needed to produce bronze.

For all of that, we still know very little about what kind of people they were. In some ways, they lived simple lives, living in stone and mud-brick houses, growing olives, and providing cypress for the building of trading vessels.

As their wealth grew, archaeological evidence indicates that they began to import luxury items such as jewelry, but no evidence exists of city walls or fortifications. Presumably, folks saw no need for them. They felt safe. Some evidence exists that the people had developed a written language, the famous Linear A and Linear B script that appears on clay tablets throughout the Aegean Islands. Their art included murals and pictures of dolphins, monkeys, and birds along with sporting scenes of men boxing each other.

They, just like every other wealthy, prosperous culture that ever existed, probably thought they would survive forever, but it all perished in a single day when the Santorini volcano blew its top.

Did the civilization disappear completely? The evidence is not quite as clear-cut as we might expect. Recent excavations indicate that the Minoans may have been crippled by the explosion but not completely destroyed. No evidence of severe damage has been found on Crete, for instance, about seventy miles south of the explosion. Besides that, studies of the Greenland ice cap conducted in 1987 indicate that the explosion of Santorini produced a dust cloud that actually took place in 1645 B.C.E., a full century and a half before the destruction of the great Minoan palaces, and evidence has been found indicating that invaders from Greece appeared off the shores of Crete two hundred years after that.



The Minoan civilization was laid low by a volcanic eruption around 1650 B.C.E. on the present-day island of Santorini, Greece (satellite image shown) that may have inspired Plato's story of Atlantis.

What happened, then?

The best evidence indicates that the Santorini explosion was only one of many reasons why the Minoan civilization faded into mystery. It was also probably due to economic problems, perhaps social unrest, certainly invasion, and maybe even the philosophical reality that civilizations all seem to come with a sort of built-in expiration date. They form, they grow, and they die probably as much under the influence of human nature as anything else. In our haste to identify *the* cause for a destruction of a civilization, it might be better to step back and examine *many* causes. The human tendency for overreaching greed and power are among them.

If this is true, the lesson for today's world becomes obvious. It's likely that no one cause, barring an immense asteroid impact or a nuclear holocaust, will mark the end of modern civilization. Eliminating nuclear threat, economic collapse, population growth, overharvesting of resources, pollution,

and climate change is important, but usually, no single cause will bring down a civilization. It's when all the threats start to show up at the same time that we need to worry because when a civilization falls, something intangible is invariably lost with it. We lose the uniquely human gifts that people bring to life on Earth. Those are irreplaceable.

Mycenaean Greece

When most people think of origin stories, they are inclined to think about myths. For religious folks in the West, those myths usually come from the early chapters of the Bible. Others, however, remember the Greek heroes of old. Stories about Zeus, Hercules, Medusa, Aphrodite, and Adonis are the very foundation upon which our civilization is built. Eros, Psyche, Halcyon, and Pandora are used to explain human behavior. Atlas and Nike have contributed their names to popular products that have become a part of our lives.

Strangely enough, however, the Bible and Greek mythology part company when it comes to explaining human origins. The Greeks have no Creator. What they remember are deified ancestors. To them, the inspirational heroes we call Greek gods were, in fact, real people whose deeds were bigger than life. Plato in his *Euthydemus* dialogue has Socrates call Zeus, Apollo, and Athena his "lords and ancestors." Augustine, the great Christian saint who wrote a theological treatise called *The City of God*, which is still read and studied by seminarians today, says that the gods are "glorified ancestors."

For this reason, it is fascinating to look at the Greek origin stories and compare them to early Christian beliefs. The New Testament of the Bible was originally written in Greek, and even much of our English Old Testament is often translated from a Greek version called the Septuagint, or "Work of the Seventy Scholars."

In Genesis, we find an origin myth contained in the story of Adam and Eve, a serpent, a garden, and a tree of enlightenment or "the knowledge of good and evil." The Greeks have a similar story but interpret it completely differently.

In their version of the story, Eve, the first woman, was not tempted by the serpent to commit evil. The serpent offered her wisdom and enlightenment.

When we looked at *Baalbek of Lebanon: The Mystery of the Canaanites*, we discovered that a woman called Naamah, the daughter of the biblical patriarch Lamach and the wife of Ham, the son of Noah, was a Canaanite, or Phoenician, who eventually, after many years of myth and legend, came to be revered as the goddess Athena of the Greeks. In their version of the story, Eve, the first woman, was not tempted by the serpent to commit evil. The serpent offered her wisdom and enlightenment. This was the very essence of the fruit of the tree of good and evil. In the Bible, the serpent tells Eve that if she and Adam eat of this fruit, they will "be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). According to Genesis 3:22, God himself confirms this truth: "[They have] become like one of us, knowing good and evil."

Putting aside the textual problems involving a Jewish, monotheistic god talking about himself as a plurality of gods, which is similar to Greek beliefs, it appears that humans had become enlightened. They had become "as gods" when they ate the fruit offered by the serpent. To the Jews of the Old Testament, and later to both Christians and Muslims, this was a bad thing.

Not to the Greeks. In their mythology, they envisioned the goddess Athena restoring what the Jewish hierarchy took away. They saw Athena as a victorious woman who restored the original blessing. Her friendship with the serpent elevated humankind's victory over Noah's patriarchal religion and returned humans to the heights where they belonged. After defending the true faith, the Canaanites—or, as we now call them, the Phoenicians— transferred this religion to the Minoans when Zeus brought Europa, the Phoenician princess, to Crete and began the Minoan civilization. It was finally assimilated by the Mycenaean Greeks when they overcame a Minoan culture that had been weakened by the Santorini eruption.

Think of the difference this made as it resonated down throughout culture. Jews, Christians, and Muslims reduced women to second-class stature, hemming them in with laws and regulations about what to wear, how to act, and how to ostracize themselves during their menstrual cycles. They

became, in effect, the property of their husbands. They were not permitted to hold any position of clerical status, let alone political or religious power.

The Greek pantheon, however, is full of famous women, heroic women, and women who were bigger than life. Greeks built statues to them. In Athena's temple, priests taught worshippers that Athena "restored the hearts of the people for whom she brought back the way of Cain and the serpent's enlightenment after the Flood. The memory of the woman we call Athena (Naamah) is enshrined forever."

Monotheistic religions forbade women to prophecy or even speak during worship. The Greeks revered the prophetess who filled the position of the Oracle of Delphi.

An insightful story is told in the New Testament's Book of Acts, chapter 17, in which Paul seeks to evangelize the Greeks by preaching a Christian sermon on the Areopagus, the "Hill of Ares." On the hill stood a statue dedicated to "The Unknown God." Paul declared that this unknown God was Jesus. The Bible goes on to say that he made a favorable impression, but we have to remember that Acts was written by one of Paul's admirers. The lack of any real response makes us wonder if the average Greek citizen was converted. That statue stood right in front of the Acropolis. It signified the precinct of Cain, which featured Athena's temple and her statue, staring down with what one can only assume was a pretty stern visage at this Christian upstart, "anointed" apostle or not.

After Cain and Abel, Adam and Eve bore a third son, Seth. In the Bible, Seth is a man, but in Greek mythology Seth is a centaur.

Greek art tends to picture the descendants of Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve, as a bare-chested centaur, half man and half horse. As such, he was less "human" than the descendants of Cain, of whom Athena was the last direct descendant.

Anne Baring and Jules Cashford's book *The Myth of the Goddess* traces the religion of the entire Mediterranean world back to the Sumerian goddess Nammu. That is suspiciously close to the Phoenician Naamah. Although the status of women in Greek culture was beginning to deteriorate when Greece eventually fell to Rome, the Roman conquerors adopted much of the Greek pantheon. By the fourth century C.E., however, Christianity, now the new official state religion, officially returned women to second-class status.

One can only wonder what the world might have been like had things turned out differently. Indeed, according to the same apostle, Paul, who once preached in the shadow of Athena, the world had fallen, even by his time, into "the present evil age" (Galatians 1:4). Was it because we threw away our

enlightenment, the enlightenment that came down to us through the first woman and her ancestors? Would the world be a better place today if women had been in charge?

We'll never know for sure because Greece at the time of the New Testament had long forgotten the Mycenaean civilization that in turn conquered and assimilated the Minoans. By 1200 B.C.E., Greece had entered its own version of the Dark Ages. It was even more consuming than the period of the Dark Ages that would engulf Europe following the fall of Rome. The great palaces were no more. Their system of writing was forgotten. Their art and sophisticated standard of living had perished. It would be centuries before Greece would again shine on the world stage under such heroes as Alexander and his generals.

Why did the Mycenaean civilization fall? No one knows for sure, but through it all Athena somehow hung on and was remembered first by the Minoans, then by the Mycenaeans, and then much later by the Greeks. Did her spirit finally help pull the Greeks out of the muck and mire of their own making?

It is very probable that the average Mycenaean Greek didn't think in these terms. They were just folks like us, trying to get by as best they could, but mythology always seems to be ahead of us when it comes to spiritual understanding. Perhaps it's time to mentally revisit the ancient days of Mycenaean glory, when the spirit of Athena flourished in the light.

EUROPE

CUCUTENI-TRYPILLIANS OF UKRAINE, ROMANIA, AND MOLDOVA: THE EDEN OF EASTERN EUROPE

Seven thousand years ago in what is now eastern Europe there flourished a mysterious people whose artifacts are, from time to time, displayed by the Vatican library. The last public viewing, which was held at the Palazzo della Cancelleria, was called “Cucuteni-Trypillians: A Great Civilization of Old Europe.” It presented, according to the exhibit commentary, the remains of a people who forged Europe’s first civilization.

No one knows who these people were. Evidence of their existence wasn’t discovered until a century ago. What little we do know, however, seems to indicate a peaceful, well-organized society featuring large protocities that were built long before similar settlements in Egypt. They were arranged in concentric circles over an area of some 135,000 square miles (217,261 square kilometers) in what is now Ukraine, Romania, and

Moldova.

What first caught the attention of archaeologists, as it so often does, was pottery. Pot shards are a common discovery, but these were different in that they featured distinguishing types of painted symbols that are unique to this area. They are officially labeled “zoomorphic” and “anthropomorphic” symbols in that they picture animals and humans formed and painted in a very stylistic manner. Black and red are the prevailing colors and are used to decorate the walls and ceilings of the houses in almost modern displays of circles, spirals, and parallel lines that form geometric shapes. The best way to picture them is to think of optical illusions that are often referred to as op-art.

None of the art or statuettes discovered were particularly fearful in aspect. Most of them represent females who are displayed with tattooed bodies and, curiously, very long feet. The few male figures usually wear masks of some kind.

No sacrifices or slave-type figures exist, no warlike illustrations, and no signs of class or status. All in all, the picture appears to be that of a peaceful, egalitarian society contented and well pleased with itself.

Archaeologists were struck by the unusual nature of some of the Cuceteni pottery, which was often anthropomorphic in nature. Figurines, often female, had tattooed bodies and preternaturally long feet.

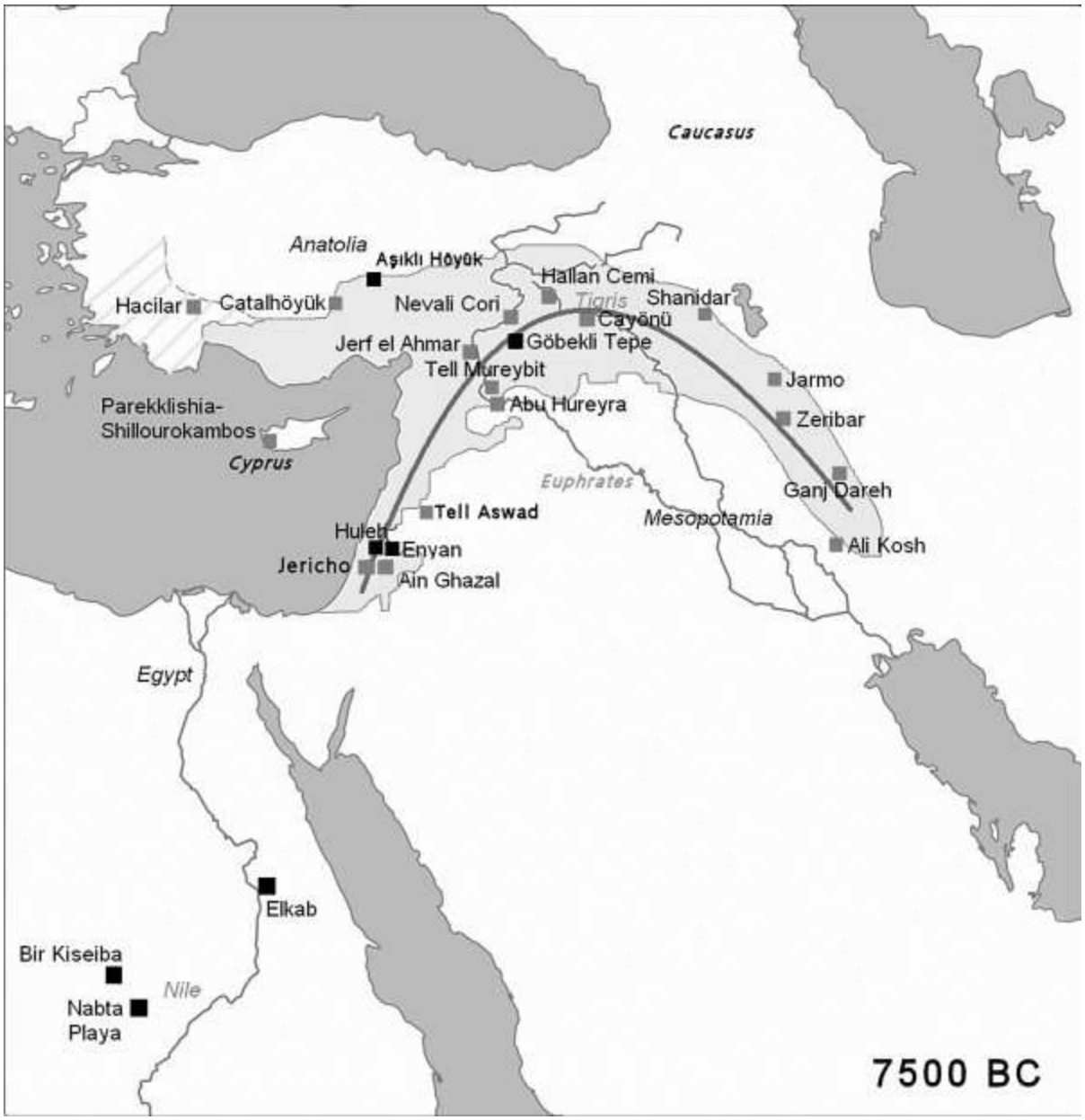
Strangely enough, no cemeteries have been discovered. We have no idea at all how they treated their dead, but this might be because of another singularity. Every one of the four thousand settlements discovered were intentionally burned. It seems as though the people built a town or small city, lived in it for sixty or eighty years, burned it down, and then moved on to a new location. Did they do it to combat the spread of harmful disease? Was it their way of fumigating or cleansing their homes and public areas? No one knows.

One theory, and it is only a theory, is that the people saw time and the world in cyclical patterns, continually starting over and beginning anew. This might explain their artistic fascination with spiral and circular patterns, but no one knows, of course, whether that is the case.

What we do know is that this was a highly organized, seemingly peaceful, highly industrious, and well-coordinated Neolithic civilization that spread out over a large area, which must have been very important to any outlying societies, lasted a long time, and disappeared without a trace until it was discovered a hundred years ago. If it proves to have served as Asia's gateway to Europe, it must have exerted an almost Eden-like quality unique to that time and place. It's a shame it eventually disappeared. The warlike civilizations that followed could have learned a lot from these people.

KARAHUNJ: THE REAL CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION?

Until recently, it was commonly accepted by most archaeologists that the roots of our civilization lie in the Fertile Crescent beginning in Mesopotamia and shortly thereafter in Egypt, but now, some experts are beginning to question that assumption. They wonder if the honor should instead go to ancient Armenia. On the plains outside of Sisian, near the site of a Bronze Age settlement and cemetery called Zorakarer, stand 204 stones that, although not as sophisticated and complex as Britain's Stonehenge, mimic its measurements and mathematical proportions almost exactly. For that reason, they are often called Armenia's Stonehenge. The proper name is Karahunj, or Carahunge, and they are almost 3,500 years older than England's famous attraction. Next to Turkey's Göbekli Tepe, they are considered to be the oldest such monuments in the world, predating both the rows of Carnac stones in France and Newgrange in Ireland. Even more intriguing, Karahunj is unique in that it appears to be some sort of a megalithic observatory built to study the night skies. Dolmens and menhirs, usually called standing stones and monuments, abound in the area. "Kar" means stone in Armenian and "Hunj" means henge, so Karahunj can be translated as Stonehenge.



The region now called the "Fertile Crescent" became the cradle of early civilizations dating back to about 9000 B.C.E. It was here that we see the first signs of agriculture and, about 4,500 years ago, the first libraries.

Language alone doesn't link these two ancient observatories, though. A few of the earliest Anglo-Saxon texts that still survive in Britain make the claim that the very first inhabitants of the British Isles came from Armenia. If this is the case, was Karahunj an early trial, a prototype, for what eventually came to be known as Stonehenge?

The Armenian Sun god is Ari. It therefore stands to reason that many of the alignments at Karahunj are situated in ways that measure the Sun's path

through the heavens. The Karahunj complex features a temple consisting of forty stones, some of which have holes drilled through them so that certain stars and the Moon can be observed at special times. Such sightings infer that these early astronomers were able to accurately measure latitude, so they probably knew that Earth was round. They were then able to arrange an accurate calendar on the landscape.

Behind all this speculation lies an intriguing question. Göbekli Tepe, built 11,500 years ago in Turkey, is much more sophisticated than Karahunj. You would think that the earliest monument would be the simplest—a sort of prototype for what later evolved—but that is not the case. Why is Göbekli Tepe more complex, even though it is three thousand years older? It was followed by Stonehenge in England some 3,500 years later and finally Egypt's Giza Plateau.

Does a connection really exist between all these monuments? Did an Armenian civilization somehow transport itself across all of the Middle East and Europe bringing its religion and stone technology with it? If so, why?

Speculation is important. It's also a lot of fun. However, until more hard evidence is discovered, the questions remain unanswered. All we know for sure is that a very mature, sophisticated people who were most certainly different from the "caveman," "hunter–gatherer," or "Stone Age" image we have been taught now seems to reveal itself as a lost civilization that seems to be very good at keeping secrets.

NEANDERTHAL ANCESTORS

Of all the racially bigoted stereotypes that have made their way into public consciousness, reinforced by cartoons, movies, books, and, sad to say, schoolteachers, none are more incorrect and odious than those attributed to the ancient race of humans called the Neanderthal.

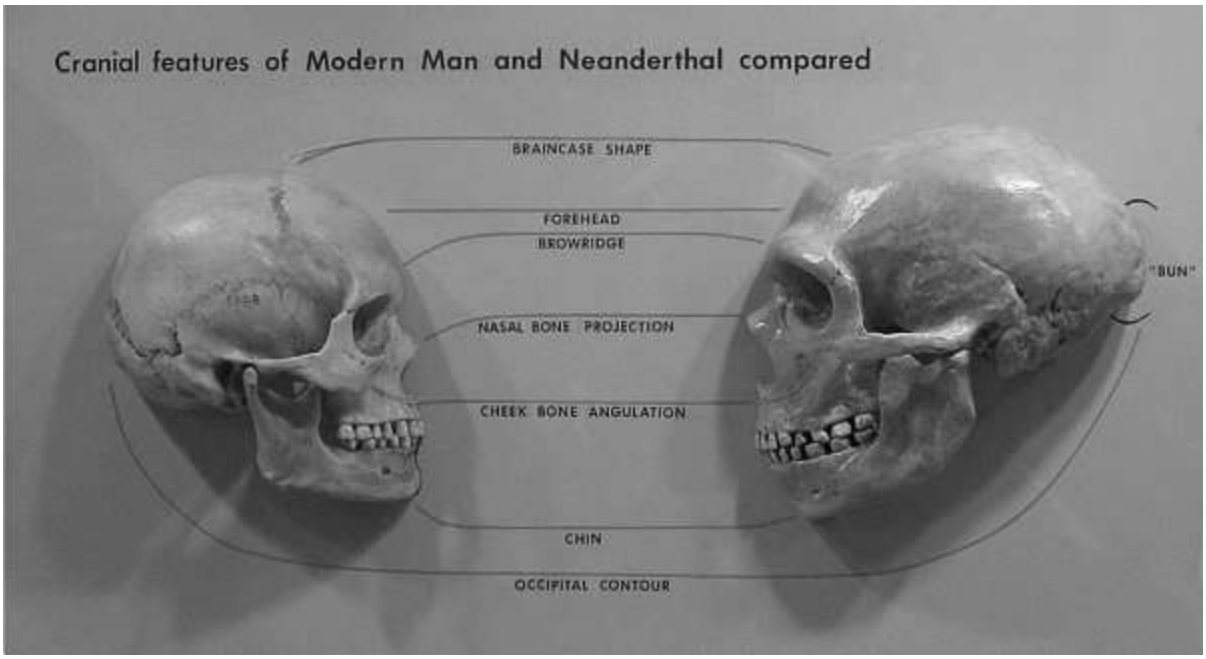
I use the phrase "race of humans" deliberately. If people all over the world, including most probably you and me, carry at least 2 percent or more Neanderthal DNA in our genes, then Neanderthals were not our "cousins." They were not "a branch of the human tree." They were early ancestors.

We carry their genes. They didn't disappear. Their stay on Earth was a lot longer than ours has been so far. They didn't become extinct. They became us. It is no more correct to say that *Homo sapiens* carry Neanderthal

genes than it is to say that for a time, Neanderthals carried the genes of *Homo sapiens*.

Every human alive today is a product of ancestral genes. Some of those genes are Neanderthal. They are also Denisovan, but we'll get to that in a few pages.

Neanderthals were not alley-oop, cartoonlike, ignorant, dumb, hairy creatures who walked heavily and carried a big stick. They made jewelry and specialized tools. They buried their dead with dignity, conducting funerals with flowers and perhaps even music. They placed memorabilia in the graves of their loved ones, just like we do today. Those funerals demonstrated a belief in an afterlife, a religion. They used makeup similar to what is found in every medicine cabinet in today's so-called civilized world, but theirs was made of ocher and natural pigments. They produced art that evidenced "symbolic thinking"— the critical thought patterns needed to contemplate a religious worldview.



A Neanderthal skull (right) compared to a *Homo sapiens* skull. As can be seen here, they both have large brains, so Neanderthals were clearly quite intelligent. Apparently, early humans also interbred with Neanderthals and, as a result, people today have about 2 percent Neanderthal genes.

They didn't grunt at each other. Modern studies done on Neanderthal remains prove that they had vocal cords physically capable of speech patterns and intelligence sufficient to produce and understand language as well as we

can. They probably had voices that were similar to people today who speak in raspy, high-pitched tones. Jon Mooallem, writing in the January 11, 2017, edition of the *New York Times*, went so far as to say that they may have sounded a bit like Julia Childs.

Recent evidence even indicates that Neanderthals passed on to us the genes needed to fight off certain kinds of viral infections.

Their brain capacity was such that if we could find a living Neanderthal today, dress her up in modern clothes, spend a few weeks teaching her our customs, and then send her out into the world, she would stand out no more than a similar Cro-Magnon of that era if given the same training in modern behavior.

Neanderthals manufactured a type of glue using birch bark that was heated to at least 644 degrees Fahrenheit. Try that at home sometime!

In a cave at the Straits of Gibraltar, they harvested the feathers of specific birds, using only dark ones, either for ceremonial or aesthetic purposes. It's unclear which. They took down dangerous game, including an extinct species of rhinoceros, that few today would want to challenge with modern hunting equipment, but they also ate shellfish and drank chamomile tea. Then they used toothpicks to clean their teeth.

To top it all off, they serenaded each other with music, their flutes tuned to what we call the pentatonic scale. In his book *The Singing Neanderthals: The Origins of Music, Language, Mind, and Body,* Steven Mithen puts forth the theory that we are compelled to make music because we inherited the trait from our Neanderthal ancestors. Delving into archaeology, anthropology, psychology, neuroscience, and musicology, he credits our fundamental need to express ourselves in song completely to an early merging of species between Cro-Magnon and Neanderthal. Willie Nelson or Ludwig van Beethoven would not have existed without them. This is in direct contrast to anthropologists who dismiss music as a "functionless evolutionary byproduct."

Recent evidence even indicates that Neanderthals passed on to us the

genes needed to fight off certain kinds of viral infections.

The shocking thing about all these conclusions is that most of them are not new. They are not the result of recent discoveries that previously eluded archaeologists. They came about by restudying information that had been hiding in plain sight for years either in museum displays or forgotten file drawers. It's not that we couldn't previously have known any of this. It's just that academic prejudice blinded experts to reality. They saw what they expected to see and then wrote the textbooks that trained others who would follow after them. It's no wonder that at least one archaeologist called these early academics "modern human supremacists." The generally accepted rule still assumes that we are at the top of the evolutionary ladder. Anything and everything below us is inferior. Neanderthals were shorter and stockier. They were, therefore, below us on the ladder.

The late Stan Gooch wrote about what he called the hybrid-origin theory as far back as 1972 when he published his first book *Total Man*. In the years to follow, he further fleshed out his ideas in *Personality and Evolution* in 1973 and *The Neanderthal Question* in 1977. In 1979, he best synthesized his ideas in *Guardians of the Ancient Wisdom*.

His theory can be summed up like this:

- Cro-Magnons evolved from preexisting human species, probably in northern India, during a long, isolated period of gradual evolution. There, the species developed Sun worship and what Gooch called "hunting magic." Theirs was a patriarchal culture prone to violence and competition.
- Neanderthals evolved in Europe and the Middle East. They worshipped the Moon and practiced Earth magic while slowly developing a matriarchal society led by strong women. They were fascinated, perhaps for religious reasons, by the northern skies and became astute astronomers.
- Between thirty-five thousand to forty thousand years ago, Cro-Magnons migrated west through the Middle East and into Europe. There, they first encountered Neanderthals. For a long period of time, the two species coexisted, sometimes peacefully, sometimes not. The merging of the species could very well have come about because of Cro-Magnon violence and rape of Neanderthal women. Gooch wonders if the Genesis accounts of

"the sons of God" mating with "the sons of men" might preserve these encounters in stories and memories of a very distant past.

- Whatever happened, and anthropologists are still a long way from being in agreement, by twenty-five thousand years ago, the predominant humans in the West resembled Cro-Magnons, but from the Middle East across to Europe, neither pure Cro-Magnon nor pure Neanderthal existed anymore.
- By fifteen thousand years ago, the return of the Glacial Age drove the new hybrids, the ones we now call *Homo sapiens*, down from the north country.

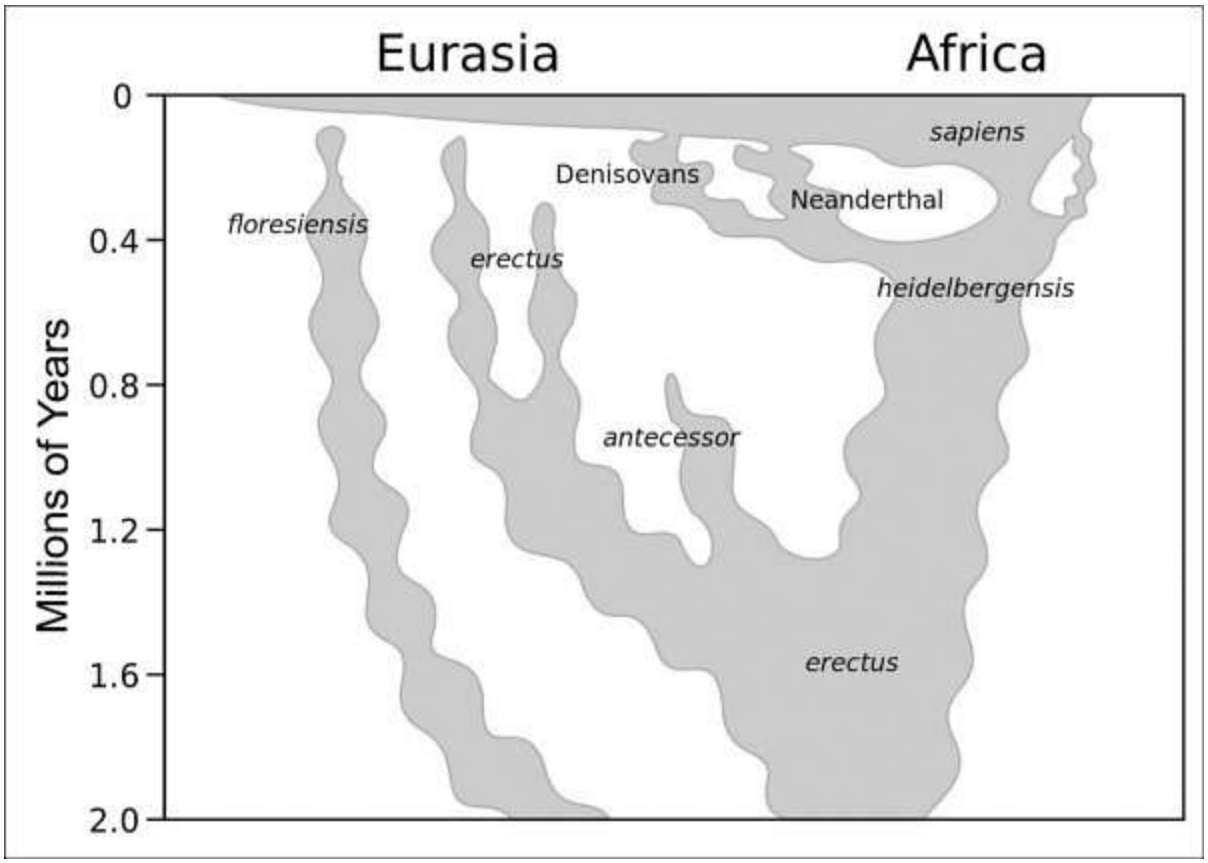
Following *Guardians of the Ancient Wisdom*, Gooch continued to develop his theory in *Cities of Dreams* and *The Neanderthal Legacy*. Largely ignored by established anthropologists, he died thinking that his ideas had been rejected.

Now with new DNA results confirming the fact that almost everyone reading this book who is not of pure African descent probably has Neanderthal genes flowing around in their bloodstream, Gooch is being vindicated. People may not accept his conclusions concerning Neanderthal traits such as spirituality and an appreciation for music, but they can no longer doubt the truth of what he presented concerning a mixture of the two races.

This leads to a radical new way to think about our origins.

Both Neanderthals and what are usually called anatomically modern humans are traditionally thought to have evolved from an ancestor called *Homo erectus*, the "upright man," between two hundred thousand and three hundred thousand years ago, maybe even as early as five hundred thousand years ago. *Homo erectus*, in turn, descended from a much earlier ancestor called *Australopithecus afarensis*, the most famous of whom is now called "Lucy," about 3.2 million years ago.

Try to get your mind around these figures. That's a long, long time ago. Two thousand years takes you back to the time of Christ. If you use traditional dates, go back five thousand years, and you can help build the Pyramids. Eleven thousand years ago finds you in the time of Göbekli Tepe.



British anthropologist Chris Stringer created this family tree showing the evolution of human ancestors from *Homo erectus* to *Homo sapiens.*

The most conservative estimate for the amount of time Neanderthals have been on Earth is about sixteen times farther back in time than the building of Göbekli Tepe, or over 175,000 years; and if you take into account how archaeological evidence keeps pushing back the time frame, we could easily end up doubling that estimate. This takes us way back before the time of the last great Ice Age. Is it any wonder that evidence of early humankind is tough to find?

The study of stalagmites in Romanian caves, which reveal changes of temperatures that alter their chemical composition over many thousands of years, shows that forty thousand years ago, severe climate alterations were going on. Europe was undergoing massive cooling and drying. Each cooling stage was called a stadial. During these stadials, evidence for Neanderthal occupation drops way down.

This was at the very same time that early humans entered the great, painted caves of western Europe and began to create beautiful murals on the walls. It was when early shamans developed the ability to think in symbolic

ways and engage visions of alternate realities. Is this timing a coincidence? Did Neanderthal DNA help contribute to symbolic thought?

Neanderthals were already old on the land at this stage. They had long since learned to control fire, and the presence of eyed needles among their artifacts suggests that they were wearing tailored clothes to ward off the cold.

Recent discoveries at an archaeological site in California indicates that Neanderthals had migrated all the way to the Americas at least one hundred thousand years ago, maybe even as early as 130,000 years ago. If that's true, Neanderthals can now add to their legacy by laying legitimate claim to being the first Americans.

James Paces from the U.S. Geological Survey in Colorado recently employed a technique called uranium-thorium isotope dating that upset everything we have been taught about the first people to reach North America. Until his work was announced, it was assumed that people, meaning modern humans, came here only about fifteen thousand years ago, maybe even thirty thousand years ago—but 130,000 years is extraordinary.

Paces's comments were understated: "We believe we have a robust and defensible age for early humans being in America more than 100,000 years earlier than people had imagined."

Jon Eriandson from the University of Oregon agrees: "The claims are extraordinary and the potential implications staggering."

His colleague Dennis Jenkins uses the phrase "mind boggling."

This amount of time could lead us to a brand-new understanding of Neanderthal civilization.

Again, I use the term "civilization" carefully. Let's review the definition we formed back at the beginning of our study:

> A civilization is any group of people who come together over time to demonstrate a capacity for uniquely human qualities that distinguish them from their animal ancestors. Such qualities include, but are not necessarily limited to, attributes such as shared moral values, technology, an appreciation for beauty in art, a spiritual yearning for meaning in the face of a limited life span, and a search for ultimate reality.

Neanderthals definitely fit this definition, so for our purposes—since

within the pages of this book we are not shackled to the outmoded prejudices that guided previous generations of academics—they formed a civilization. It was unique, special, and lasted a very long time. Like all civilizations, it eventually died out, but part of the reason for that "death" was that they merged with what we now call anatomically modern humans—us! It wasn't that they were "taken over" by us or "hunted to extinction" by us or were even "superseded" by us. Two unique human ancestral varieties merged to form something new and exciting.

Think of it this way. We used to say that sixty-five million years ago, the dinosaurs became extinct. Now we know that they didn't do any such thing. They are still with us, and you can hear them every morning if you go outside or open your window. They're called birds. They rose from the ashes of destruction, changed their form, and morphed into something new and creative, better able to adapt to the changing environment.

Neanderthals were no different. They still exist. If you want to see one, look in a mirror, not in a museum.

This kind of talk no doubt drives some experts crazy, but DNA evidence doesn't lie. It's time to face facts head-on and start to undo the damage a generation of mistaken scholarship has wrought on the popular consciousness. These teachings are still in the textbooks. It's time to rewrite them.

Now let's go a step further. If Neanderthals are as ancient as we have just seen, extending way back before the last Ice Age, could that very Ice Age have wiped out the evidence of a previous, unknown, and almost totally lost, high-level civilization? It wouldn't have to have been a civilization based on electrical grids and sophisticated infrastructure like ours. It might have been a totally natural, completely Earth-integrated society that didn't exist by using up resources like ours does. As such, it might not have left hard evidence behind. After all, they were here for a long, long time. They spread out all over the globe. They crossed oceans. They must have been doing something right.

Therefore, even if we discover evidence for Neanderthals that takes us back thirty thousand or forty thousand years, could it be that we are finding only the tail end of a much more ancient civilization? In other words, are we finding the remains of survivors of a civilization that is far older than anything we have yet been willing to accept?

This aerial photo shows members of a tribe deep in the Amazon who have never had outside contact with other people, even in the twenty-first century. Imagine if a catastrophe brought an end to civilization, but these tribespeople remained untouched and later encountered survivors.

Think of it this way. If a comet were to suddenly wipe out the bulk of humankind now alive on the planet, undoubtedly, some survivors would remain, but they wouldn't include the populations of our teeming cities and progressive population centers. The survivors would no doubt be so-called primitive people in areas far removed from the centers of civilization. They might be Stone Age people living today in the depths of Africa or South America who don't know that New York, Paris, or Beijing exist.

As late as summer 2018, satellite photos captured images of people who live deep in the Amazon rainforest. They probably wonder about the strange

birds that occasionally fly over their heads—“birds” that we call airplanes. If the great cities of the world go down in flames, it would hardly register on the consciousness of such people. They would continue to go about their daily business with hardly a thought or care, and if, in the future, they were to come upon, and perhaps mate with, other survivors of the catastrophe, people who looked and acted differently but were still humans like them, they would form a new and viable civilization.

Then, ten thousand years from now, if a future archaeologist were to search for evidence of their existence, he or she would no doubt deduce that that one group of people “conquered” or “assimilated” or “replaced” the other. If the resultant offspring exhibited physical characteristics familiar to the future anthropologists, those anthropologists would probably deduce that “their kind” had won out and decide accordingly to teach that history to their students.

However, it would be a lie influenced by their racial stereotypes.

What if Neanderthals once formed a civilization that was in touch with technologies of the mind and spirit that precluded the need to invent wires and generators, roads, and skyscrapers? Call it a “psychic tool kit.” What if psychic energy was once as common as electrical current is today? What if that great civilization fell victim to one of the great cataclysms that periodically wreak havoc upon Earth—say an Ice Age? What if hundreds or even thousands of years later, the survivors of that cataclysm, their numbers dwindling and their former powers diminished, managed to scrape by long enough to hitch a ride on the new bandwagon driven by what we today call “modern” humans and by doing so lived on in our DNA? What if those psychic powers are still lurking in the windmills of our minds, ready to once again rise to the surface and be employed by modern humans?

It’s a fantastic thought, to be sure. Little direct evidence supports such an outlandish theory, but it goes a long way toward explaining the mysterious building techniques behind the construction of ancient structures and the mythologies that are strewn throughout our human story. It might even explain some of the psychic powers exhibited by the fortunate few among us who have glimpsed other realities and explored parallel realms.

his is a brave new world of human research. It will involve looking

Tanew at mythology about the relationship between ancient "gods" and "human" women.

Whenever we undertake out-of-body experiences or have lucid dreams, whenever we grasp an intuitive thought or break through to what feels like another dimension—for that matter, whenever we burst forth into song—perhaps our old Neanderthal DNA comes awake and, for a moment at least, we remember what it was like to be a human on Earth thousands upon thousands of years ago. Does that explain the left-brain/right-brain, analytical/intuitive possibilities inherent in modern humans? Are our brains the result of the merger of two human species—one intuitively psychic and one technologically materialistic? Does this explain the many old, religious texts that tell us that the "gods" once mated with "humans" to conceive "the mighty men—the heroes of old"? Are we the product of those offspring?

Evidence? Slim to none.

Interest? Off the charts.

Worth pursuing? Definitely!

If we can accept the far-out findings of modern physics that speak to us of multiple worlds, entangled particles, and other heretofore esoteric lore that is now part of the mainstream, maybe it's time to consider all the ramifications inherent in who our ancestors really were, how old we are as a species, and how we got here. It isn't a big leap.

This is a brave new world of human research. It will involve looking anew at mythology about the relationship between ancient "gods" and "human" women. It will mean reinterpreting how we approach almost forgotten legends first told by those who lived a long, long time ago. It will include more DNA research into various population groups. It will necessitate the study of psychic abilities similar to those now being conducted at places such as the Noetic Institute in California and the Monroe Institute in Virginia.

Unquestionably, the ancients accomplished things we do not understand today. They could very well have been employing what I have called a psychic tool kit. We are just beginning to study some of these powers under laboratory conditions.

The ancient art of intuitive dowsing, for instance, is an old but very accepted technique that is still practiced all over the world. No one really understands how it works, but it does, and it is not limited to simply finding water. Out-of-body and near-death experience workshops are gaining in popularity. The practice of Siddhis, or paranormal abilities, are being studied under laboratory conditions. If these ancient powers are latent within us, and scientists today increasingly think they are, then it only makes sense to study ancient people who may have practiced them.

Neanderthals certainly qualify for such a study.

Solutrean Artists of France and Spain

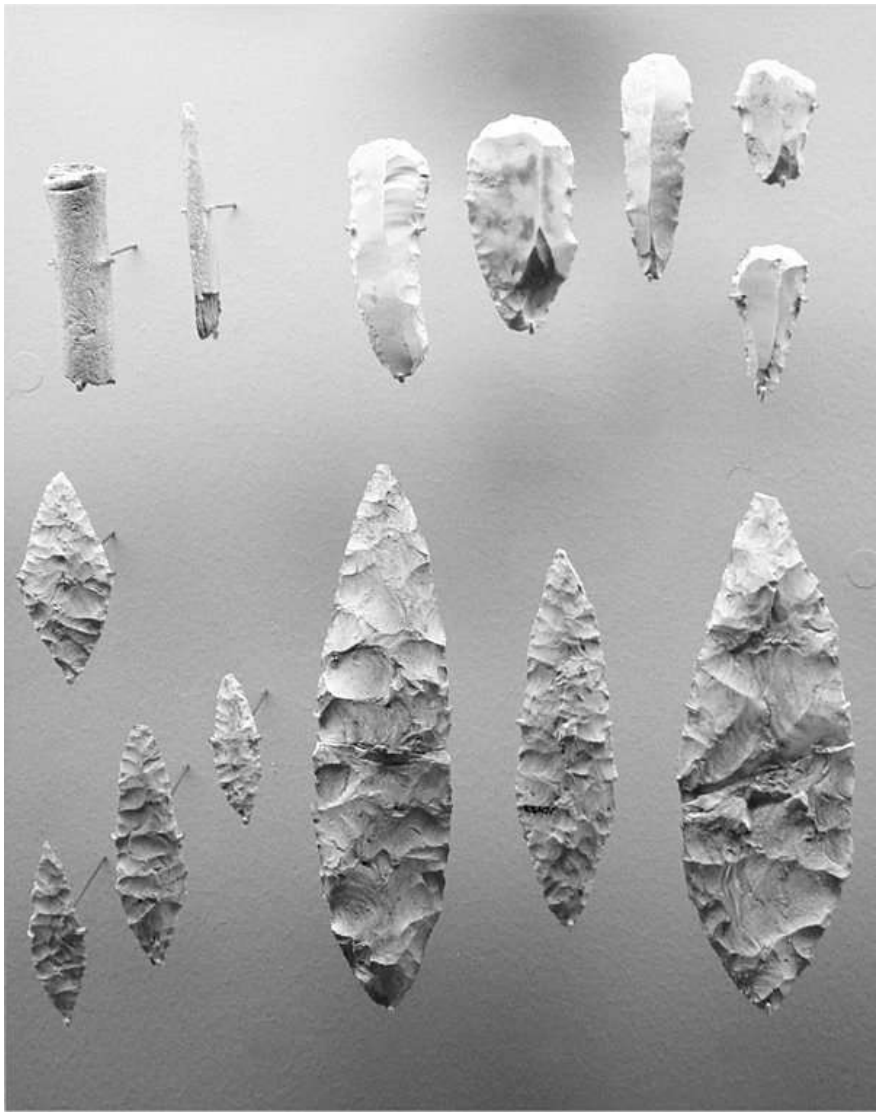
One of the most enigmatic civilizations that ever lived was, if even half of the ideas about them are true, also one of the most influential.

I have called them a civilization because they display many of the features inherent in our definition of the word “civilization”:

- They came together over time to demonstrate “a capacity for uniquely human qualities that distinguished them from their animal ancestors.”
- They demonstrated a stone-knapping technology that was later enhanced by the Clovis people of North America. Their skill set very probably included boat building and sea travel.
- They had an appreciation for art that included the beginnings of the great artistic traditions of the painted caves.
- They appreciated beauty and possibly wondered about such things as the search for ultimate reality as evidenced by their artistic expressions.

For more than eight thousand years, from about 25,000 years ago until about 16,500 years ago and possibly even 12,000 years ago, in the very midst of the last Ice Age, they lived and thrived in southwestern France and northern Spain. Their name comes from Solutré near Dijon, France, the birthplace of the famous mustard. Until recently, they were allowed a bit of obscurity, but when Jane Auel wrote her now famous series of novels set in this era of history, culminating in *The Shelters of Stone* in 2002 and *The Land of the Painted Caves* in 2010, she had her heroine, Ayla, mate with Jondalar,

a Solutrean man who was a talented flint knapper. Much of the material she illustrated in her novels was based on new conclusions drawn from contemporary archaeological studies.



Some tools found at Solutrean sites in France. These people had advanced tool-making skills that disappeared when they died about 16,500 years ago.

No one really knows where the Solutreans came from. One theory is that they evolved in the area of western Europe where we now find evidence of their culture. Another traces their roots back to eastern Europe and even Africa.

As for where they went when they disappeared, some believe they simply evolved into cultures that followed them. Others claim that they

migrated either east toward Turkey or west to the Americas.

Most of the evidence we have of their presence has been discovered under cliff overhangs and caves. Thus, they were the prototype for what we think of when we say “caveman,” but that is where the similarity ends. They were many things, but they were not big, hairy, dumb brutes who carried clubs. Some scholars believe them to be a Neanderthal/Cro-Magnon hybrid cross, but this doesn’t come close to describing them.

We’ve found virtually no open-air settlements outside of caves. No burial sites are available to examine and very little in terms of animal bones left behind at midden sites and waste dumps, so it’s very difficult to build a museum display that illustrates how they lived. They are indeed a lost civilization.

However, circumstantial evidence exists that they were a seafaring people who made a good living by exploiting the bounty of the sea during a time when a lot of Earth’s water was tied up in glaciers. Later, when the Ice Age began to melt away and water returned to the oceans, the rising sea levels no doubt covered a lot of evidence that would have revealed more of their civilization, which was located near shorelines.

What we have found is intriguing, though.

Solutreans were some of the most artistic and innovative flint knappers the world has ever known. Their stone artifacts, tools, and projectile points, a superb example of Paleolithic craft surpassed only by the American Clovis culture, which itself may very well have been a Solutrean-based culture, were in so much demand that prior to World War I, hundreds of sites were dug out and looted, forever spoiling any possibility of recovery, let alone the means of studying them in context with their environment.

Their technique consisted of bifacial flake technology. That means that both sides of a stone flake, struck from a prepared blank, were sharpened in a serrated fashion that produced a very sharp tool similar to a modern bread knife. Also, evidence exists that the Solutreans either invented or perfected a method of heat treatment that resulted in beautiful examples of chert that went far beyond simple necessity.

Along with their stone tools, they left behind some beautiful examples of rock art. From the famous “Venus” figurines, probably Earth Mother icons, to the murals on their cave walls, it is safe to say that Solutreans were

worldclass artists. The most famous examples of this art came later in the magnificent work in Lascaux and the caves of southern France and northern Spain during the time period called Magdalenian about 16,500–13,000 years ago, but the Solutreans certainly were no early amateurs. Their paintings depict great auks, walrus, and bearded seals but also salmon, tuna, and deepwater marine species.

Experts from differing academic and scientific disciplines disagree, but if only some of their theories are true, the Solutreans could well be the genesis of legends concerning the "gods"….

They obviously didn't encounter many of these species by fishing from the beach. They must have had boats in order to hunt the edges of the ice floes. That, coupled with evidence that they made ropes and were accomplished tailors, given the delicate eyed needles they left behind, indicates that they were probably a seafaring culture of accomplished sailors familiar with both the gradually warming waters of the Mediterranean and the ice floes of the North Atlantic.

If that were not enough, evidence suggests that it was the Solutreans who invented the spear thrower now called the atlatl and possibly even the Mediterranean version of the bow and arrow.

The Solutreans had a long run, to be sure, but the question before us now is what happened to them after they supposedly disappeared about twelve thousand years ago. Where did they go?

Experts from differing academic and scientific disciplines disagree, but if only some of their theories are true, the Solutreans could well be the genesis of legends concerning the "gods" who survived the great cataclysm of the Younger Dryas comet event to help shape the nature of the survivor's new world.

When we say "the Solutrean people of southwestern Europe," we are apt to form a mental image of unified stability that doesn't explain the reality of their civilization. The period of time they lived there was long indeed. They

lasted for twelve thousand years, more than twice as long a time as that which lies between us and the building of the Pyramids of Egypt. They had plenty of time to adapt and evolve.

Most of what is known about these people is based on the science of lithic technology. “Lithic” means stone. What that means is that although specialists may sound authoritative, as most academics try to do, their work consists of finding stone tools from different areas that are made in similar fashion. They then date the organic soil in which the tools are found, check their findings against similarly dated sites, and publish their pronouncements.

Although we can often be in awe of archaeologists and what they accomplish, that’s a pretty slim methodology.

Here’s the way I like to explain it. Suppose that twenty thousand years in the future, an archaeologist puts together a group of grad students and interested volunteers to excavate an old plantation site in South Carolina, Georgia, or Alabama. As they begin to dig, they unearth the home of a young Civil War veteran who marched with General Robert E. Lee to Gettysburg.

First of all, they probably won’t find anything other than the rock foundation of his house. Everything else would long ago have rotted away. What if they got lucky, though? What if they found some mementos or artifacts that helped them determine what kind of life the man lived? Maybe they learned enough to deduce that the man lived in a small house without heat or electric lights and traveled everywhere either on foot or by horseback.

Then, another archaeological team comes along a few years later and digs some more. They discover that this same young man died in this house, but at the time of his death, it was fully electrified. To offer an even more bizarre twist, they learn that he traveled around the countryside in a Packard Twelve automobile, and one of his great-grandchildren walked on the Moon!

Technology obviously changed drastically over the course of this young soldier’s life. His lifestyle was completely altered. From the perspective of ten thousand years in the future, this might seem a miracle. Undoubtedly, our two hypothetical archaeological teams will publish results that are radically different from each other.

However, each team will be right. If technology can grow, multiply exponentially, and completely change a single human life within a period of fifty or sixty years, imagine how much it can change a culture over a period

of twenty thousand years!

The truth is that if we dig in the vicinity of our hypothetical young soldier's southern home, we might find evidence of an automobile, but unless we are lucky enough to uncover the factory where it was built in one state and the dealership where he bought it in another, we won't know where it came from, and if the car finds its final resting place in a junkyard a few miles away, we won't find it at all.

This is an inherent problem when it comes to drawing too many inferences in the field of archaeology. Without written accounts, and sometimes even with them, we can never really be as dogmatic as some people sound when they announce their findings. Human nature being what it is, it is all too easy for experts to become enamored with a particular interpretation. Then it becomes very tempting to cast aside contrary evidence.

Therefore, we need to be careful when we consider the claims of those who believe that the Solutreans helped shape the world that emerged after their demise.

Nevertheless, here it goes.

Solutreans really began to mold public consciousness with the 2012 publication of a book called *Across Atlantic Ice: The Origin of America's Clovis Culture* by Dennis Stanford and Bruce Bradley. Both men held impeccable credentials, so it immediately caught the attention of TV shows that dealt with human settlements in America and quickly became the subject of controversy.

The book is technical and well written. In it, Stanford and Bradley carefully present what came to be known as the Solutrean hypothesis. Here it is in their words:

> Who were the first Americans? The Solutrean hypothesis, in simple outline form, is that during the Last Glacial Maximum, sometime between 25,000 and 13,000 years ago, members of the Solutrean Culture in the Southwest coastal regions of Europe were led by subsistence behavior appropriate to their time and place to exploit the ice-edge environment of the polar front across the North Atlantic and colonize North America to become—after several millennia—what we know as the Clovis peoples, who eventually spread far and wide across the Americas. This does not necessarily

> mean that the Clovis people were the ancestors—or the only ancestors—of contemporary Native Americans, and it does not mean that Paleolithic northeast Asians did not also colonize the Americas. It does mean, in concert with other strands of evidence, that Clovis is part of the rich, complex, and wonderful story of the ebb and flow of people whose descendants are what we call Native Americans.

To summarize, Stanford and Bradley believe that members of the Solutrean culture (they probably wouldn't go as far as to call them a civilization) migrated by boat westward across the Atlantic from Spain and France, following the base of the glacier until they reached the outer banks off the coast of Maine and Canada. From there, they moved southward down the East Coast of America, probably ending up somewhere near Chesapeake Bay. They settled there for thousands of years, eventually fanning out across the land. Their finely honed stone craft eventually evolved into what is now known as the Rolls Royce of flake technology, the beautifully fluted Clovis point. It is no coincidence, claims Bradley, that more Clovis points have been found within a hundred miles of Washington, D.C., than in all of the American West. The center of Clovis culture appears to have been in the east.

These examples of tools demonstrating the "Clovis point" bear a strong resemblance to the tools used in the Solutrean culture, which has led to some speculation about Solutreans migrating to North America.

At some point in time, they met up with an Asian-based people who had crossed on foot across the Beringia land bridge that connected Asia to America. The descendants of these people merged into the Clovis culture. Their progeny, however, were destroyed by a comet impact 12,800 years ago, which effectively brought to an end the megafauna prey that was their primary source of food.

The benefits of the Solutrean bifacial stone technology survived the devastation. A serviceable point called the Folsom point immerged as the result. Although it employed the same bifacial knapping technique as Clovis, it was smaller and easier to make. That was acceptable because the megafauna such as mammoths were now extinct, leaving a game supply that was less difficult to kill. As the Folsom people gradually spread back into the lands previously made uninhabitable by the comet impact, they eventually became the ancestors of many Native American Indian tribes, possibly

carrying with them stories about the ancient ones who survived the destruction of their “previous” world.

If Stanford and Bradley are correct, the typical bifacial Indian arrowheads found in virtually every history museum represent the legacy of the Solutrean people of western Europe.

A second theory involving the Solutrean culture traces their migration east across Europe rather than west to America.

In 2014, Andrew Collins published a book entitled *Göbekli Tepe: Genesis of the Gods: The Temple of the Watchers and the Discovery of Eden*. He makes the claim that the Solutreans were the ancestors of the mythical, seemingly godlike human beings who, because of their superior knowledge and technological information, brought about the beginning of the Neolithic, or Agricultural, Revolution and the construction of the now famous temple complex uncovered at Göbekli Tepe. They were called by various names, but the most popular are Anunnaki and Watchers of Eden.

Collins’s research identifies a similar stone-crafting technology that can be identified and followed from the Solutrean tradition in Spain east through Europe, where it evolves or merges into a culture called Swiderian. In this migration, he believes that the Solutreans were coming home, so to speak, having originally evolved here in the first place. He believes, along with Bruce Bradley, who coauthored a paper on the Solutrean hypothesis, that the roots of the Solutreans came from the cold forest steppes north and northeast of the Black Sea as far away as the Russian Plain.

Now things really heat up because the skull and bone fragments of these people bear evidence of their being Neanderthal/Cro-Magnon hybrids. In the rock art and cave paintings left in their wake on their route east, Collins finds evidence of a hypothetical Solutrean bird cult that seems to imply attachment to the sky, similar to Native American myths concerning Sky People.

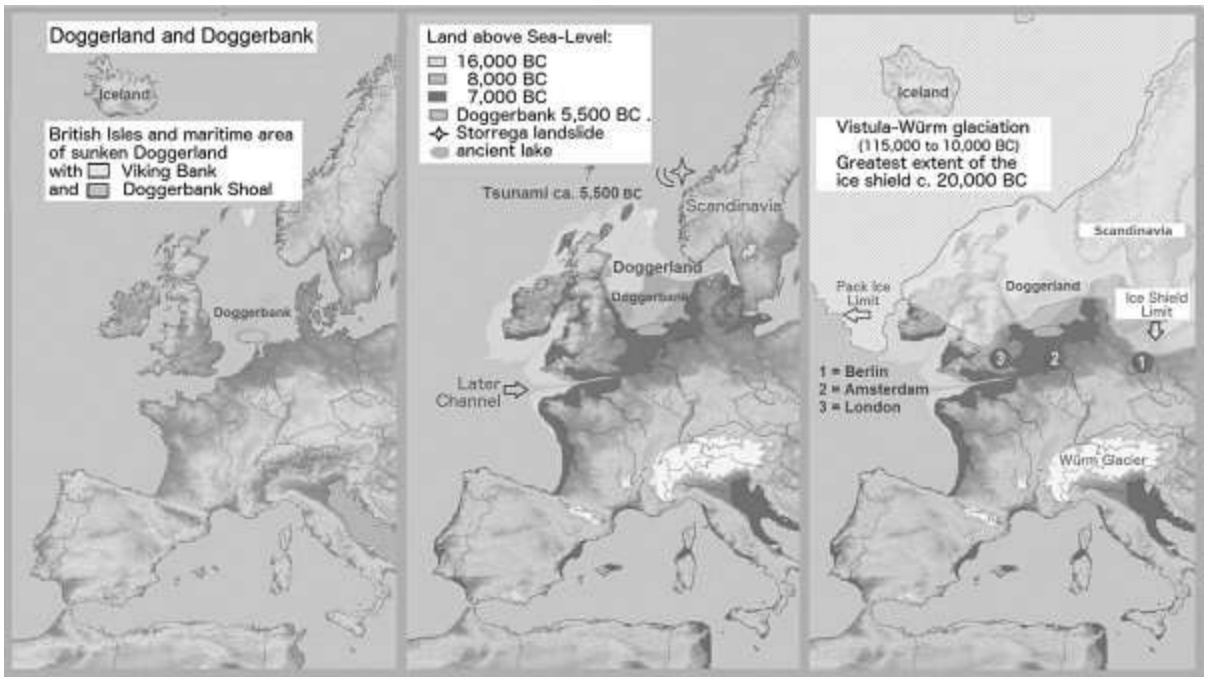
If all this is true, the Swiderian people, descendants of the Solutreans, carrying the genes and thus the physiology of a Neanderthal/Cro-Magnon hybrid, might have been the people who, following the Younger Dryas comet impact, were the ones later called “gods,” who organized the builders of Göbekli Tepe, convinced them to turn from their hunter–gatherer ways in order to build the earliest and one of the greatest megalithic temples yet discovered, inaugurate the Agricultural Revolution, and bring about a new civilization on a planet recovering from a devastating catastrophe.

Of course, the explanation above is an oversimplification of some very detailed research, but we can, at the very least, say that the Solutrean culture is intriguing. It could be that someday, when all this research is synthesized and reviewed, we will discover that much of what we call *our* civilization in Europe, Asia, and America stems from these mysterious survivors.

DOGGERLAND

"Mesolithic" means middle-stone. It refers to the Middle Stone Age, which, in Europe at least, began about fifteen thousand years ago and lasted until about five thousand years ago. It sits right between the Paleolithic ("Paleo" means old or ancient and "lithic" means stone) and the Neolithic ("Neo" means new) ages.

It was a time when our ancient ancestors learned to chip small stones called microliths and mount them to spear points or other handles to form tools and weapons. During this time of history, our ancestors ate a lot of fish and mussels, but with this new weapon in their tool kit, they were able to branch out and hunt deer, wild boar, and small game. They also gathered edible plants, berries, fruits, and nuts.



During and just after the Glacial Age, when sea levels were lower, the British Isles were connected to mainland Europe, and there was habitable land where the North Sea is now that archaeologists call Doggerland.

Why is this important to know when learning about lost, ancient civilizations?

Because the land they inhabited was quite different from landmasses we know today. Thousands of years ago, the North Sea began to rise as a result of meltwater from the last great Glacial Age. An entire world off the British coast was flooded. It was the world of a Mesolithic civilization that we now call Doggerland. Thousands of Stone Age settlers lived there. It formed a strategic land bridge between Britain and Northern Europe, every bit as important, though not as large, as Beringia, which connected Siberia with Alaska. Thanks to new technologies and archaeological techniques, we are beginning to paint a picture of how those folks lived. The emerging portrait is surprising. These were well supplied, healthy folks who were anything but primitive. Their land was doomed, of course, but the process took a long while, generations, really, to unfold, and they certainly were not aware of anything like a coming catastrophe.

Then, in a single, momentous event, the whole civilization was destroyed by a tsunami eight thousand years ago, triggered by a landslide off the coast of Norway. Waves up to sixteen feet (five meters) high swept over the region, drowning everything, and everyone, in its path.

For years, modern fishermen have been routinely pulling up mammoth bones in their nets. Now we know what killed them.

Archaeologists have known about Doggerland for a long time, but until recently, they haven’t had the tools to explore it properly. Now with 3-D imaging and new underwater mapping techniques, a whole lost civilization is being revealed. Technicians can even identify underwater rivers that once flowed through a fertile landscape.

Humans lived there from about twelve thousand years ago until the culminating flood. Now scientists are hoping to find human DNA evidence so they can begin to build a picture about where these people came from and where the survivors went.

Professor Robin Allaby of the School of Life Sciences at the University of Warwick describes the work being done:

> The constant environment of the sea floor preserves ancient DNA exceptionally well allowing us to reconstruct palaeoenvironments many thousands of years older than is possible on land at the same

latitude. The project promises unprecedented insight into the Mesolithic in North West Europe and will also enable us to continue to push the frontiers of DNA analysis.

A more important reason exists to explore Doggerland, though. It gives us a working laboratory in which to study the effects of climate change on human populations. Slow environmental changes were taking place, of course. The waters were rising. As they built up, the people became vulnerable to a single trigger such as a hurricane or tsunami. Land that would once have been able to withstand the onslaught was no longer able to withstand the "big one" when it hit.

People who live in low-lying, coastal places these days could benefit from this kind of study. Doggerland reveals what happens when populated areas are affected by climate change. Indonesia, southern American cities, Pacific Islands—all could learn lessons from this part of our history.

The Megalithic Builders

When it comes to examining the civilizations that built the great megaliths, the question is not necessarily *who* built them, or even *how* they built them, as much as *why* they built them.

Take the well-known complexes found at Stonehenge and Avebury, for instance. We know roughly *when* they were built, and that gives us a pretty good idea *who* the builders were. We can trace the fact that some of the stones they used came from miles away. We even know *where* the quarries were that supplied them. We have a pretty good idea *how* they were transported. Good, factual, archaeological evidence is behind current theories.

The Carnac stones in France are just one of several megalithic structures around the world whose purpose we will likely never know for certain.

However, the great, unanswered question involves *why* they were built at all. Stonehenge and Avebury were constructed over a period of five thousand years, from 8000 to 3000 B.C.E. What motivation is strong enough to inspire people to work over that long a period of time? What forces could possibly have been in play?

Did people want to build an astrological observatory? Sure—but was that a desire strong enough to last for five thousand years?

Were religious beliefs involved? Probably—but what religion survives unchanged for five millennia?

A lot of people speak with an authoritative voice, saying they know the reason. They produce television shows that portray actors dressed in period clothing, appropriately dirtied up for the camera, demonstrating religious ecstasy while engaged in ceremonial procession along sacred paths on the

equinox or solstice. They show the sun peeking over the horizon, turning the landscape from dark to light in a moment's time, as the assembled multitude huddles in expectant jubilation.

Really? Did it happen like that, or is all the drama simply one person's guess?

The truth is, we don't know why a civilization was motivated to construct such megaliths. That question remains with us wherever we go around the world.

- Why are the Pyramids called tombs when no bodies have ever been discovered inside them?
- What are the Moai (stone statues) of Easter Island looking at?
- What do the raised relief images of Göbekli Tepe represent?
- What's the real purpose of the Nazca lines?
- Why did the Anasazi build in such inaccessible places?
- Why did builders in the British Isles need so many stone circles? What did they really use them for?
- What's up with the Carnac stones?

On and on it goes with opinions galore, but no one knows the answer. If you do an online research project or visit any great megalithic site, you will find no lack of explanations, but when you carefully determine what facts are behind those opinions, you are left with only one clear explanation: it's a mystery.

That in itself is one of the most fascinating things about the civilizations that built the great megaliths. Even if they had help from parties unknown, the fact that they were built by our ancestors is beyond doubt. The fact that they had a big reason for going to all that trouble, and the fact that that reason was sufficient to motivate them for a long, long period of time, is also without question.

However, the fact that we don't know the answer to the "Why?" question means that our history has a missing chapter that could go a long way toward telling us who we are. We are a species suffering from amnesia. How can we possibly figure out where we're going if we don't know where we've been? Why have we forgotten such a monumental motivation that obviously meant so much to our ancestors? Why was the reason allowed to

die out? Why can't we remember?

It's enough to keep you awake at night.

I'm as guilty as the next guy when it comes to expressing reasons behind the "Why?" question. I've written about Stonehenge myself in previous books. Take this entry, for instance, that I wrote after my first visit there:

> At Stonehenge the original energy came from the earth itself. It took thousands of years to reach the monument stage that it exhibits today. There was a complex mathematical code, based on the megalithic yard, and a sophisticated astronomy built into its very architecture. But I wonder if, by the time Stonehenge reached its final form, it might have already been a relic to a forgotten spirituality. I wonder if the stones themselves, and the monumental effort required to move them into place, was by then simply a tribute to a forgotten mystery, remembered by an elite who had long since lost the experience of the earth energy which inspired the original builders, and retained only memories of it.

Reading those words now, I'm almost ashamed of myself. They sound so authoritative, so well thought out, but the truth is that I don't know what I'm talking about any more than the experts who have worked there for years. It *feels* that way to me, sure, but it's just a feeling.

The truth is that these people were a lot more intelligent than we ever give them credit for. For some reason, we have bought, hook, line, and sinker, the notion that these people were primitive. They were anything but that.

Take the recent discovery of the language of the Picts, for instance. We know that they were an ancient, founding civilization that lived in the northern territory of Scotland, but we have accepted the idea that they were uncultured savages because that's how the Romans described them. Julius Caesar considered them to be a barbaric race of people who could barely communicate beyond the use of sword and shield. According to Roman reports, the Picts painted and tattooed their bodies, hence the name "Picts," which means the painted ones, and resisted the Roman army only because they used the unfair tactic of guerrilla warfare rather than the more heroic and gentlemanly method of meeting the Romans head-to-head on the field of battle. They couldn't even write, for heaven's sake!

Now, though, unequivocal evidence has been uncovered that the Picts could not only write but they had a sophisticated method of doing so that the Romans never figured out, and they invented it more than 1,700 years ago. They resisted Roman might until the Romans finally gave up and let them have the Highlands, and they continued their resistance until they were finally converted to Christianity and eventually succumbed to Viking invasions around 850 C.E. It turns out that the Vikings were more barbaric than the Picts.

In October 2018, the journal *Antiquity* reported:

> In the last few decades, there has been a growing consensus that the symbols on standing stones are an early form of language. It is based on a series of symbols the Picts carved on stone, bone, metalwork and other artifacts.

They had a sophisticated method of communication. We were just blinded by our preconceived prejudice and didn't understand it.

That's the way we generally think about the even more ancient megalithic builders. It is perhaps the greatest stumbling block of all when it comes to contemplating ancient civilizations. The megalithic builders were in touch with a powerful belief system that we have completely forgotten. We can speculate. We can imagine. We can even pontificate. We can hope that it still lurks within us, buried deep in our subconscious, sometimes rising to the surface in insightful moments of clarity or half-remembered dreams, but we just don't know what it was.

One possibility takes us beyond the scope of simple archaeology. It puts forward the possibility that the megalithic builders were highlighting—or, we might even say, reinforcing—a preexisting Earth energy infrastructure that *their* civilization recognized and took advantage of but that *ours* has forgotten. It's called many things, but perhaps the most popular is the ley line grid. I wrote about this grid extensively in my book *Ancient Gods*, so I won't repeat all that information here, but here is a quick summary.

More often than can be attributed to chance, megalithic structures like the Praying Hands of Mary (pictured) in Glen Lyon, Scotland, are situated directly upon ley lines.

Ley lines are bands of Earth energy that were identified and marked by significant stone markers, ceremonial centers, and astronomical observatories. This point of view was championed recently when a system of straight lines across the deserts of America's Southwest was discovered by NASA satellite pictures. Straight roads, thirty feet across, from Mexico almost to Colorado were made by people who had not yet even imagined a wheeled vehicle.

Why exactly thirty feet across when the builders knew only foot travel? When explored by archaeologists on the ground, it was discovered that rather than bypass a canyon or mountain, the old ones had chosen the difficult path. Often, they carved handholds in precarious cliffs where no one in their right mind would normally choose to go, especially if carrying a load on their back. A short detour would have made the way much easier, but instead, they chose to go right over the top and down again into the valley.

At the end of every day's travel, archaeologists have found signs of a

stopover—a motel, so to speak. Were they following unseen energies and listening to music we have forgotten how to hear?

Many countries yield similar grids. England's are probably the most studied, but Bolivia and Peru in South America and the entire area of Central America, especially when seen from the air, all appear to be part of a worldwide network. China and Japan are members of the same network as well as North Africa, Australia, and the lands of Southwest Asia that once were called Persia. Everywhere we look, energy ley lines are part of the ancient landscape.

Francis Hitching was the first to popularize ley lines in his book *Earth Magic*, published in 1976:

> Expressed simply, the theory is this … that the whole of (megalithic man's) civilization (was) locked together by a mysterious cobweb of interlocking straight lines, the evidence for which still exists on maps and in the scenery today.
>
> I feel that ley-man, astronomer-priest, druid, bard, witch, palmer, and hermit, were all more or less linked by one thread of ancient knowledge and power, however degenerate it became in the end.

Wouldn't you like to be consumed by a spirituality that was so inspiring it could motivate you to transport megaton boulders all the way across the English countryside? Wouldn't you love to wake up in the morning filled with a sense of purpose that gave meaning to your day? Wouldn't you appreciate a belief system so strong it would cause you to move mountains?

Did our ancestors once thrill to those kinds of feelings? If so, they experienced something we have forgotten. The megalithic builders knew something we don't. They were in touch with a reality we have forgotten.

For that reason alone, they are worth studying because if we could recapture their enthusiasm and purpose, it might turn us away from the destructive path we seem to be following today.

John Michell may have best summed up our current situation in his book *The New View Over Atlantis.* In words touched with pathos and laced with irony, he summons up a time when Earth energy and Gaia power were a common part of daily life, then contrasts that time with our lives of impotent religion:

We appear today to have lost touch with some source of inspiration

known in former times, whose departure has left the churches as if under some malign enchantment. Empty, cold, and shunned, their shelter denied to travelers, often locked up, the sensations they invoke are those of guilt and embarrassment. Moralistic vicars drove out the musicians, banned plays and processions, washed the colors off the walls. Now the incumbent, hopelessly bewildered, often appears to see himself as a custodian of an ancient ruin, endlessly worried by details of the rotting fabric, his thermometer sign at the gate pointing out the sum required to prevent the whole edifice from crashing about his ears.

If amnesia is, indeed, our plight, that sums it up pretty well.

DENISOVAN ANCESTORS

In 2010, the traditional theory of who we are and where we came from got knocked on its head. It was an exciting year, it was an exasperating year, it was a frustrating year, and it was a breathtaking time, all at once, but it was only the beginning.

A common saying exists in scientific circles that "uncommon claims demand uncommon proof," so when a brand-new human species that no one knew about was discovered, people awaited some pretty serious evidence.

I have a confession to make. I was no different from anyone else. I was skeptical. Shortly after this time, I was just beginning to do research for a book that would later turn out to be called *Ancient Gods: Lost Histories, Hidden Truths and the Conspiracy of Silence*. Reading a book that you published some years ago is like stepping into a time capsule. I like to think I'm pretty openminded and receptive to new research, but when I read now the words I wrote back then, it makes me shudder. In a passage fairly dripping with disdain, I wrote these words:

> In March of 2010 an announcement about a discovery of a new human species from Siberia called Denisovan Hominin took the scientific community by storm. These ancient folks lived about 41,000 years ago and were contemporaries with both Neanderthals and so-called "modern" humans. As a matter of fact, bones from all three species were discovered in the same cave. Scientists were able to tease out some mitochondrial DNA samples and determined

that the new species shared a common ancestor with Neanderthals and may have interbred with ancestors of modern humans. As a matter of fact, between three to five percent of Aboriginal Australians also carried their DNA and there is evidence that as long as 400,000 years ago, Denisovans were mating with *Homo heidelbergensis* all the way over in Spain at a time when only Neanderthals were thought to have lived there.

The world of anthropology was thrilled and magazines galore carried the news.

But how much evidence had archeologists uncovered to deduce this earth-shaking find? One finger bone!

Let's not disparage the science of anthropological DNA studies. It produces amazing results. But one finger bone does not exactly a fully-packed theory make. The headlines, easily read and digested, looked great. NEW ANCESTRAL HUMAN SPECIES! But it's not a very convincing hypothesis once we dig in, read the small print and uncover what a miniscule sample they're getting excited about.

This story took a new twist in November of 2015, when Carl Zimmer, writing an article for the New York Times, ("In a tooth, DNA from some very old cousins, the Denisovans") revealed that new DNA evidence, discovered in a tooth found in a Siberian cave, pushed back the accepted dates another 60,000 years. Now we have both a finger bone and a tooth.

To quote Todd Disotell, a molecular anthropologist at New York University, "our species kept company with many near relatives over the past million years. The world was a lot like Middleearth. There you've got elves and dwarves and hobbits and orcs."

He continued. On the real earth, "we had a ton of hominins that are closely related to us."

A tooth and a finger bone, and now we've got Middle Earth revisited. Obviously, there is a lot more work to do before we set our ancient ancestor's history in doctrinal stone.

To all who read those words, I hereby offer a heartfelt apology. A lot of work has been done since then, and it all proves that Denisovans were the real deal. Their DNA has been found all over the world, including in many

Native American Indian tribes. In the *New York Times* on August 22, 2018, Carl Zimmer, whom I mentioned above in a less than complimentary way, reported that the remains of a ninety-thousand-year-old female who was unquestionably the daughter of a Neanderthal mother and a Denisovan father was found in a cave high above the Anuy River in Siberia. Research conducted by Svante Pääbo, a renowned geneticist at the prestigious Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, has confirmed the result. The cave has a history of sheltering humans and other species for 120,000 years. It now appears certain to have attracted humans of differing species who apparently had no problem with getting to know one another on a personal level.

Denisovans were big folks. Anthropologists call them “robust.” They would have formed a very good basketball team. Apparently, individuals of eight and nine feet or more were not uncommon, and given the amount of DNA evidence they left behind in the genomes of modern human population groups found everywhere from Siberia to Asia, Australia, and North America, they got around and were usually made to feel very welcome.

Located in Siberia's Altai Mountains, Denisova cave is where a previously undiscovered ancestor of *Homo sapiens* was discovered. It was named *Denisova hominim.*

They were big and widespread. Judging from the beautiful jewelry they made, they were intelligent and very, very old on the land. Neanderthals seem to have disappeared from the fossil record about forty thousand years ago, just when the explosion of art in the caves of western Europe burst on the scene. Denisovans were gone at about that time as well, but their culture had been around for many thousands of years by then. Did they, like the Neanderthals, blend in to modern human populations by the simple act of assimilation? In other words, did they become us? DNA evidence indicates that this was the case.

Swedish geneticist Svante Pääbo analyzed the Denisovan DNA and concluded that these human ancestors interbred with Neanderthals and Cro-Magnons and also apparently migrated all the way to Southeast Asia.

Dr. Pääbo said it very eloquently: "Maybe Neanderthals and Denisovans

were absorbed into the modern human populations. That could be a big part of the story."

We can take this theory even further when we consider evidence from North America. A large amount of Denisovan DNA is found in modern American Indian tribes such as the Ojibwa, who lived in the area of the Great Lakes. They are also the keepers of many legends involving ancient giants who were familiar to their ancestors. Do stories about giants, Sasquatch, and other Bigfoot-type creatures carry echoes of very real and "robust" Denisovans who once lived on the land?

Anecdotal evidence has been reported for years about giant bones being discovered and even photographed. Much of that evidence is now gone because museums such as the Smithsonian have been forced to return boxes and boxes of Native American remains due to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) enacted on November 16, 1990. This act required all agencies that receive federal funds to return any and all "cultural items," including bones, to their descendants, so if the Smithsonian was hoarding away giant bones, as conspiracy theories insist, they are now, at least officially, reburied in Indian graves.

When we consider the possibilities of these new and ongoing studies, the ramifications are almost staggering. According to current thinking, Neanderthals and Denisovans split off from each other between four hundred thousand and five hundred thousand years ago. Modern humans didn't appear on the scene until two hundred thousand or possibly three hundred thousand years ago.

Their brains were as big as ours. They could think and reason as well as us. They were biologically compatible enough to interbreed with both Neanderthals and our Cro-Magnon ancestors. They were perfectly capable of crafting fine implements such as bracelets, beads, needles, and tools. They made the very first bird-bone flutes ever used in the world. They seem to have been the inventors of pressure flaking in the creation of sharp stone tools. Very compelling evidence exists that they were sophisticated astronomers with an in-depth knowledge of eclipse cycles, and perhaps, they were the first to understand calendar-based cosmological systems that would eventually be incorporated by religions all over the world. Why should we assume that given that amount of time, more than we've had so far, they wouldn't do the same thing we did—establish a comfortable civilization?

The only thing standing in the way of that theory is the lack of hard evidence, meaning megalithic construction sites, but as we shall soon see in the next few entries, that evidence may have been hiding in plain sight all along. It's just so old that we didn't understand what we were looking at. Also, the plain fact remains that nature would long ago have reduced even the hardest evidence to dust.

However, the most fruitful place to search might very well be in legends and mythology. Consider the following representative clues:

- Tara MacIsaac, writing for *Ancient Origins* magazine on April 25, 2016, said: "Several Native American tribes such as the Choctaw and the Comanche of the United States and the Manta of Peru have passed down legends of a race of white giants who were wiped out."
- The Bible in Genesis 6:4: "There were giants in the earth in those days.…"
- Norse mythology: The Jötunn (Jötnar in Old Norse) are often opposed to the gods. While usually translated "giants," most are described as being roughly human sized. Some are portrayed as huge such as frost giants (*hrím¸ursar*), fire giants (*eldjötnar*), and mountain giants (*bergrisar*).
- European mythology: In folklore from all over Europe, giants were believed to have built the remains of previous civilizations, including Stonehenge.
- Adrienne Mayor, writing in *Fossil Legends of the First Americans:* "The remains of the Si-Te-Cah or Sari, a legendary tribe of red-headed giants, were found in 1911 in Nevada's Lovelock Cave."

Many more references are found throughout literature. Until recently, very few people paid any serious attention to them. Maybe it's time to revisit the whole situation.

Andrew Collins is doing just that. In his 2018 book *The Cygnus Key: The Denisovan Legacy, Göbekli Tepe, and the Birth of Egypt,* he presents an exciting summary of recent scholarship about Denisovans, and his book, *Denisovan Origins,* is scheduled for release in 2019.

The idea that we are the only species capable of doing what we did in terms of developing a sophisticated, technological civilization is totally prejudiced.

The Denisovan/Neanderthal presence cannot be overestimated just because of the time frames involved. Four hundred thousand to five hundred thousand years is a very long time, allowing for all manner of evolutionary experimentation. We have to admit to ourselves that any assumption of no progress or no evolutionary advancement for them during this time stems partly from simple prejudice on our part. The idea that we are the only species capable of doing what we did in terms of developing a sophisticated, technological civilization is totally prejudiced.

It is appropriate to ask for ancient evidence of such a civilization, but we need to ask modestly, remembering that only ten years ago, we never thought Denisovans had existed at all, let alone that they were so widespread. We had no idea that we carried their DNA in our bodies. To make matters worse, when rumors of their existence surfaced in legend and myth, we simply dismissed such tales as nonsense. It is important to remember that every civilization won't necessarily take the same form as ours. We associate civilization with exploitation and destruction of resources. It's hard for us to imagine anything else. Others might not have been so shortsighted and environmentally corrupt.

Maybe we need to reconsider our place in the world. It might prove that we, indeed, see farther than our ancestors because we are standing on the shoulders of giants.

Dragon and Griffin Megaliths of the Altai Mountains

On May 8, 2017, the *Siberian Times* reported a fantastic find that was actually discovered in 2013. The information wasn't released right away because a lot of study needed to be done to confirm what is a really unique archaeological site.

Carved and drawn into rocks weighing in at an astonishing 120 tons,

archaeologists found a unique image of a dragon that displayed features similar to those of crocodiles and dinosaurs. It's easy to imagine such things. Our minds are good at turning naturally formed cracks and crevices into images that look like something they are not, so the rock underwent a lot of study before Ruslan Peresyolkov could declare it an authentic carving. What also became apparent was that the work of art was incredibly old. Independent dating techniques yielded an age of at least ten thousand years, maybe much more.

Who carved it? No one knows. The best that researchers could offer was "unknown ancient people about whom we know nothing." To make matters even more confusing, the six rocks forming the images were not a natural formation. They were somehow moved into position.

How did they move such massive boulders? No one knows.

Denisovans lived in these mountains a long time ago, but they were gone by forty thousand years ago. Could these megaliths be that old?

Then came a second bombshell. Researchers found another megalith nearby, this one formed into the image of a griffin: an eagle-headed, mythical creature found in Siberia's Scythian civilization that existed between two thousand and three thousand years ago, but Scythians didn't create such monumental sculptures. At best, all experts can say is that the sculptures, already incredibly ancient when Scythians held sway in the area, might have inspired the Siberian myths.

When asked about such possibilities, Peresyolkov replied:

In my opinion, the dragon has no analogues, but can be compared to the Scythian animal style. Perhaps the Scythians inherited a more ancient system of symbols … this is a unique discovery … it is impossible to date the griffin and dragon megaliths until the culture that created them is identified, in relation to creators of renown megaliths such as Stonehenge.

This site currently defies any and all explanation. Speculation abounds, but it is so unusual, so unique, and so unexpected that until further research

offers some breakthroughs, all we know for sure is that at the end of the last Ice Age, at least as early as the building of the first great temple complex at Göbekli Tepe in Turkey and possibly a long time before that, an ancient, forgotten, and lost civilization seems to have achieved the impossible.

Denisovans lived in these mountains a long time ago, but they were gone by forty thousand years ago. Could these megaliths be that old? Only time will tell.

Gornaya Shoria Megaliths

The year 2013 was a milestone for Siberian archaeology. With sites newly available for research after the checkpoints put in place by the former Soviet Union were removed, archaeological teams were able to explore new areas, so at the same time the Dragon and Griffin Megaliths of the Altai Mountains were discovered, what appear to be enormous, human-constructed megaliths were found at Gornaya Shoria in Southern Siberia.

To get an idea about how big these structures are, the largest carved stone blocks known to researchers today are found at Baalbek in Lebanon. The Siberian stones are larger. Much larger. They are so big that the primary reason to believe they are a natural formation rather than shaped stones is that it’s hard to believe that anyone who lived that long ago could accomplish such a feat as shaping them, moving them, and then stacking them into place. We’d be hardpressed to do it today even if we used the largest industrial cranes available.

Aside from size, however, the stones meet all the criteria of megalithic construction. They show right angles and sharp corners, they appear to be placed carefully next to one another after having been shaped and cut to fit, they have flat surfaces, and they are placed on top of one another. Some of the rocks even display burn marks and seem to have been melted into place rather than shaped and fitted. This same feature is found at ancient Peruvian structures such as Sacsayhuamán.

A most curious phenomenon is that when researchers held a compass near them, the compass needles all swung to point away from the structure, regardless of direction. Obviously, some kind of magnetic anomaly is at work.

When all this new information became available to the public, the

Internet exploded. Without anything to go by except a few photographs and an article or two, stories about giants, ancient aliens, and lost civilizations filled the digital cloud.

It’s much too early to jump to conclusions, but the pictures and evidence released so far in magazines and on television programs are very compelling. If the megaliths prove to be authentic, they will undoubtedly change our whole idea about ancient civilizations existing far back into the last Ice Age. The fact that this is in the heart of Denisovan country makes the story even more interesting.

Siberia conjures up images of ice and snow. How could a civilization have endured there during a glacial Ice Age?

The truth is that although twenty thousand years ago much of the Northern Hemisphere was locked in ice sheets, parts of Canada, Alaska, and Siberia were ice-free. They were cold, to be sure, but Siberia provided almost an oasis in the wilderness. Ancient DNA recovered from the permafrost reveals a lot of information about prehistoric plants, fungi, and animals that were able to thrive in Ice Age conditions.

If a Denisovan civilization existed back then that had learned how to survive and flourish, they would have had many thousands of years, much longer than we’ve been around, to develop sophisticated ways to cope. Their methods wouldn’t necessarily have involved the use of what we call technology. Their civilization would have been totally different from what we experience today. As we discussed in the entry about Neanderthals, it could very well have consisted of what we called a psychic tool kit rather than the nuts-and-bolts, power-based one familiar to us.

If the megastructures at Gornaya Shoria prove to be artificially built rather than a natural phenomenon, all bets concerning ancient civilizations are off. Our story will change overnight. Until more proof is announced, though, all we can do is wait.

CHINA AND JAPAN

THE LOST KINGDOM OF THE SHIMAO RUINS

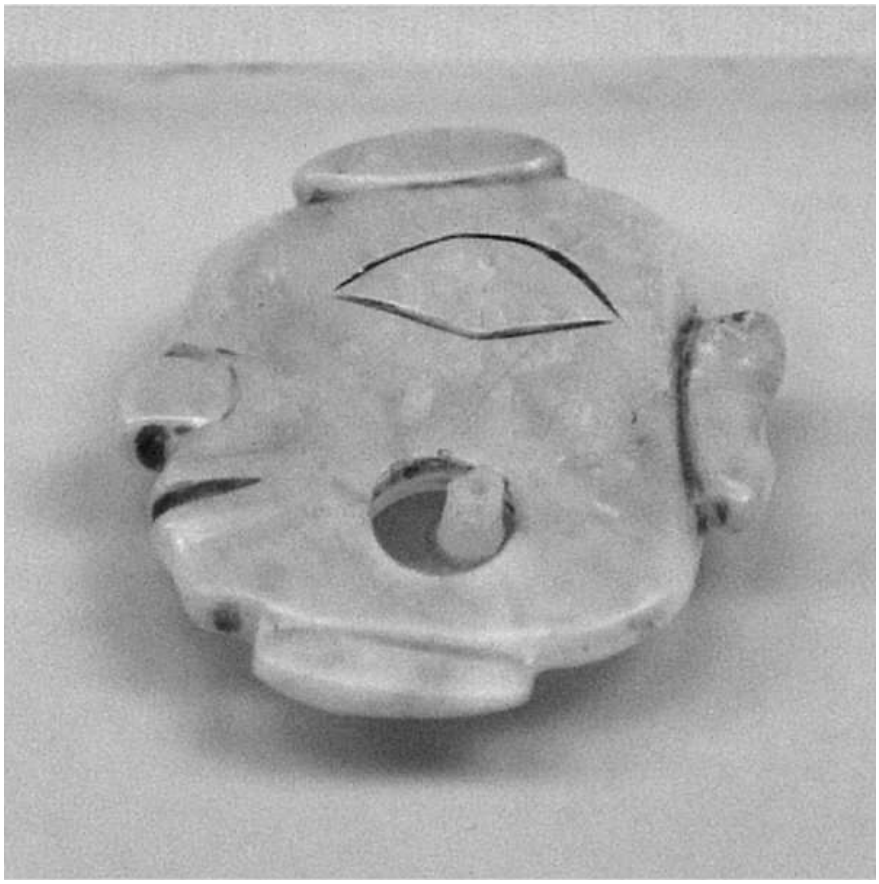
Pyramids are found in Egypt, Central America, Mexico, Peru, and Indonesia. Ancient peoples built them in Croatia, Slovenia, Russia, and Greece. It now turns out that they were built in China as well.

The recent discovery of a large step pyramid in Shaanxi, northwest China, that some archaeologists now claim dates back more than four thousand years has experts baffled. It was built before the foundations of the Great Wall of China were laid. Such a construction project necessitated a coordination that only a flourishing civilization could have provided, but until now, no one thought that such a civilization existed in that area back then.

Called the Shimao ruins, they were discovered back in 1976, when they were thought to be part of the Great Wall, but after serious excavations in 2011, evidence began to suggest that the ruins were much older than previously thought. They are now recognized as the largest prehistoric ruins

in China and were surrounded by what may have been the biggest city in the world at that time. It was at least 1.5 miles (4 kilometers) square, completely surrounded with a defensive wall containing a lot of human skulls that, sadly, seem to be related to human sacrifice.

The pyramid itself is at least 230 feet (70 meters) high with eleven broad steps. Palaces were built at the top that seem to be the homes of an elite caste, so we can assume that a hierarchical society ran the city. As is often the case with ancient megaliths, ritualistic images, including a half-human, halfanimal figure, can be found carved into the rocks.



This jade head is one of the treasures collected at the Shimao underwater ruins. It is on display at the Shaanxi History Museum in China.

It has long been assumed that the Central Plains region of China gave birth to the first Chinese civilization. Now that theory is in serious jeopardy. Chinese civilization could very well have begun in the highlands of the northwest, but *when* that civilization began, *why* it chose to build there, and *how* they accomplished the feat is anyone's guess at this point.

Why a pyramid? Also, if they were the first, preceding everyone else, why did they require such an immense defensive wall and feel the need to conduct human sacrifices? Were they protecting themselves from those whose skulls were found buried in the walls?

At this point, a lot of questions remain unanswered. Archaeologists are quick to point out that the Chinese experienced their own periods of amnesia when it came to ancient history. A long time before the first emperor of the Han Dynasty came to power, the Chinese were evidenced to have made maps with grid lines, indicating longitude and latitude. This was knowledge unknown in the West until the late Renaissance. Over time, sophisticated maps such as these fell into disuse, as China began to experience a local dark age similar to the European Middle Ages.

It would appear that cultural amnesia is a common malady when it comes to human history.

Underwater Ruins and Forgotten Peoples

In 1995, off the southern coast of Yonaguni, Japan, a disoriented diver who found himself too far away from the Okinawa coast discovered a sunken group of megalithic blocks that appeared to be a human-made, terraced structure. When he reported his finding, he kicked off a hotly debated argument that continues to this day. Some believe the structure to be a natural formation eroded by water but still explained by the usual forces of nature. Others disagree. They claim the discovery is of a ten-thousand-year-old artificial structure built by an ancient lost civilization that has long since been submerged by rising ocean levels. Where some see erosion and weathering, others see arches, straight edges not usually found in nature, staircases, and pylons.

After sending out subsequent diving teams, more sites were reported. Currently, five subsurface archaeological sites are now being explored in depths ranging from twenty feet to as deep as one hundred feet. Especially interesting is that when pictures of round holes and a straight line of smaller depressions were published, people familiar with dry-land quarries immediately recognized the kinds of drilled holes used to split and quarry rocks before transportation. They also spotted what they called a “plus” sign and a V-shaped emblem of some sort.

Controversy swirls around the site. The ranks are even divided among those who are usually allies when it comes to a liberal view concerning daring interpretations of traditional sites. Geologist Robert Schoch, known for his controversial work concerning the dates of the construction at Giza in Egypt, and John Anthony West, who before his death gathered quite a reputation as a "rogue" Egyptologist who championed ancient dates for the construction of the Sphinx, believe the structure to be natural, although it was possibly modified a bit by human hands at some point in time. Graham Hancock, after diving at the site himself, believes it to be the work of an ancient culture. In his book *Underworld*, he credits this site with his interest in underwater historical studies, which is as yet mostly ignored by land-based archaeologists. It is his contention that one of the reasons traditional archaeologists as a whole do not subscribe to the theory of really ancient civilizations is because they are looking in the wrong place.

Sea levels on planet Earth are not static. If you look in places as far removed from one another as Egypt, Lake Titicaca, and Dwarka, you will find underwater ruins. It's as simple as that. However, submerged civilizations must be incredibly old, so they don't fit the accepted story. To study submerged sites demands a set of skills most archaeologists don't have. They are not divers. Besides that, until recently, the technology needed for deep-sea exploration has been prohibitively expensive for most people, so the sites go unexplored and unexplained.

If the Yonaguni site is eventually proved to be a megalithic discovery, it has to be more than ten thousand years old because that's how long it's been submerged. This pushes it back into the time of an ancient Japanese civilization called the Jōmon people, who lived there for a long, long time—about 16,500 years. They were a complex civilization that were probably the first people on Earth to manufacture pottery. During much of their time, Yonaguni would have been above water. They would undoubtedly have, at the very least, walked over these structures, natural or not, so it is not out of the question that they were the creators of this site.

I first came across the Jōmon people while researching my book *Ancient Gods*. Since then, the more I study whatever archaeological data is available about them, the more I wonder if they were unique in more ways than one.

First of all, they existed for a very long time without exhibiting a lot of change. That in itself is interesting. It is the nature of civilizations to grow

and expand, to spread out and multiply while evolving changes within their culture. The Jōmon don't seem to demonstrate this trait. Unlike modern civilizations that live by the mantra "grow or die," the Jōmon seem perfectly content to have accomplished great things while living within a simple code that existed at the heart of their civilization. That code consisted of one word: "Enough!"

A monument found at the Yonaguni site could date back 16,500 years. There is still debate as to whether such apparent megaliths are natural or manmade.

Did they learn the importance of a secret that is missing from our hectic, modern life? Did they learn how to be happy and content while scorning the need to grow or die?

When our economy is growing, when new-construction housing starts determine whether or not we are economically healthy, when modern citizens are happy only when wages are up, when politicians are elected at least in part because of their promises to get the economy booming, and when towns adopt the policy that they must grow or die, it is obvious that the word "enough" doesn't even enter our mindset when it comes to determining our level of happiness.

Don't civilizations stagnate when they say "enough," though?

That’s what our leaders tell us.

The Jōmon didn’t seem to think in those terms, but they accomplished a lot anyway. Consider the following:

- They spoke the same language, acted in the same ways, went about their daily life, and suffered very little social turmoil for more than sixteen millennia! The archaeological record shows no evidence of warfare or social upheaval until they were conquered and absorbed by the much more aggressive Yayoi people about 2,500 years ago. The Yayoi is the civilization usually said to have been the antecedent culture for the modern Japanese, so the demise of the Jōmon came from outside, not within, their culture.
- The Jōmon invented the world’s first pottery. Although some archaeologists insist that the discovery of pottery must be attributed to the Yayoi, examples of Jōmon “corded” pottery, named after the distinctive cord marks embedded in their clay pots, have been excavated that unequivocally date back to 16,500 years ago. They are found continuously throughout the archaeological record for the next fourteen thousand years and show up in ancient layers in archaeological digs from Fiji to Valdivia in South America. In 1965, when the discovery of thousands of Jōmon pottery shards in Valdivia was reported in *Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology*, it set off an argument in the field of anthropology that is ongoing to this day. How could ancient Ice Age Japanese pottery show up in South America? Because it didn’t *seem* possible, it was declared to not *be* possible—but then even more problems arose. Kernels of rice were discovered baked into really old Jōmon pots. Rice is a cultivated crop, so now it appears that the Jōmon people even invented agriculture thousands of years before anyone else.

This example of Jōmon pottery comes from its Middle Period (2500 to 1500 B.C.E.). The Jōmon were a civilized and peaceful people in Japan before they were conquered by the Yayoi.

- DNA research in the American West indicates that the ancestors of many American Indian tribes originally came from Asia. That is to be expected because people who crossed the Siberian Land Bridge, after spending countless generations around the shores of Lake Baikal in Siberia, were of Asian descent, but skeletons found in the region of Lake Baikal share similar DNA with the ancient Jōmon people. That means that the antecedents of the

Jōmon set out on foot to migrate both east to America, eventually becoming the ancestors of the American Indian peoples, and south to Japan, where they would become the ancestors of the Japanese. In other words, ancestral Japanese might have a legitimate claim to be among the first Americans.

- Evidence seems to indicate that the Jōmon were also a seafaring people who followed the so-called "Black Current" that sweeps north up the Pacific, swings east below the Aleutians, and then south down the American West Coast all the way to South America. They might have left a record of their passage behind in the form of stone anchors found off the coast of California and pottery discovered in South America.
- Now we have discovered an enigmatic, megalithic, submerged structure off the coast of Okinawa, which, if it turns out to be a human-built complex, was undoubtedly constructed during the Jōmon people's time on Earth. This was obviously not a static civilization.

The culture lasted 16,500 years, accomplished all the above, and never seems to have gone to war, polluted their land, overexploited their natural resources, or populated themselves out of existence. How did they do it without breaking apart?

All civilizations eventually die—Greece and Rome are classic examples—but the Jōmon had a long run and accomplished at least as much as either of them.

In my book *Ancient Gods*, I summed up their civilization in this way:

We might even say that they changed the course of the entire human species on the planet. If pottery was made 16,000 years ago, they invented the process. If plants could be tamed and made to grow for the benefit of humankind, they discovered the techniques. If there was a collision with a comet 12,800 years ago, they saw it. If there was a sudden melt-down following the Younger Dryas 11,600 years ago, they experienced it. If there was a Siberian land bridge, they walked it. If boats sailed down the coast of California to South America, they navigated them. They were a prolific people with an impressive resume. Yet they didn't change all that

much. That’s the one thing anthropologists agree on.

> Might it be possible, without one shred of archeological evidence except common sense to make such a claim, that they didn’t change very much because they didn’t see the need to do so? Had they discovered, probably by accident rather than philosophical pursuit, that life could be enjoyed and bring accomplishment without increasing its speed? Did they survive for so long because they never felt the need to over-exploit their environment? Did they discover the wisdom of “enough”?

I like to think that the Jōmon were a peaceful, productive, and active people who learned the wisdom inherent in the word “enough.” Before they were eventually conquered by a more aggressive people, they seem to have had a good life.

Am I right in my assessment? Well, some archaeologists will certainly disagree and say that not enough evidence exists yet to support my claim, but until I learn otherwise, I’m sticking to it. It gives me hope.

MESOAMERICA

OLMEC OF CENTRAL AMERICA

"Meso" means middle. Thus, Mesoamerica, or "Middle America," refers to an area that extends from central Mexico south through Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and northern Costa Rica. It was home to many unique cultures, but the two civilizations that dominate early Mesoamerican history are the Olmec and the Maya.

The traditional history of these civilizations is that the Olmec comprised the mother culture, thus preceding the Maya. When the Olmec were growing their civilization at such famous sites as La Venta, situated near the Gulf Coast in what is now Mexico, the Maya consisted of bands of nomadic groups in the jungles to the southeast. According to the accepted timeline, the Maya inherited everything in their culture—from their social structure to the technology behind their magnificent stone architecture—from the Olmec.

However, this theory, like so many other traditional theories concerning

early civilizations, is now being modified. Although the Olmec and the Maya are easy to differentiate during what is called the Classic Period, when both had developed distinct languages and cultures, the Preclassic Period offers quite a different story. The two civilizations were more similar than they first appeared to be. It is likely that they shared much in common. Indeed, some scholars now contend that the Maya are a lot older than they were previously acknowledged to be. Perhaps they were even the first great civilization of Mesoamerica. The Mayan complex at Ceibal might precede the Olmec complex of La Venta by as many as two centuries.

This leads to the difficult and confusing conclusion that the Maya were the earliest Mesoamerican civilization but didn't attain their distinction until after the Olmec had risen to power, so the Olmec might have been the first historically prominent civilization, even though they are younger than the Maya. The Maya eventually went on to greatness, leaving behind a powerful legacy, but some of that legacy might have been adopted from Olmec culture and distinguishing characteristics.

That last paragraph may sound confusing, but that's because it's a confusing time for Mexican archaeologists. No one seems to be quite clear about what the relationship was between the two cultures. Both built pyramids. Both practiced some form of human sacrifice. Both developed a written language consisting of a form of hieroglyphics. However, a lot still needs to be determined.

Whenever the dust settles over the whole Olmec–Mayan controversy, including the mysteries about who influenced whom and how they built the amazing structures for which they are famous, the fact remains that they were both amazing civilizations shrouded in mystery. It may even turn out that behind the whole picture looms the shadow of a Caribbean civilization that preceded them.

The Olmec enjoyed a successful run that lasted from about 1500 to 400 B.C.E. in Central America. Their civilization roughly coincided with the somewhat older Mayans, yet the Olmec ascended to prominence before the Maya did.

We don't know what the Olmec called themselves. The name is derived from Aztec writing much later. Their civilization lasted for at least a thousand years, though, and is remembered primarily because of the mysterious stone sculptures usually called the Olmec heads. They stand some nine feet (three meters) tall and bear unquestionably African features. However, even beyond the question about who built them and why they resemble African warriors who, at that time in history, are not thought to have had any contact with the Americas is a deeper mystery. What do they represent? When we look at those sculptures, are we seeing ancient Olmec? Are we viewing the folks who first inspired the Olmec to great construction projects, or are we gazing into the eyes of a people who came before both the Olmec and the Maya? If so, can it be said that these statues were made to honor the founding fathers who might have come from Africa?

Now it gets even more intriguing. The famous figure carved on Stela 3 at La Venta seems to be the image of a bearded, white man. When it was

discovered in 1946, the likeness struck such a resonance that archaeologists immediately christened it “Uncle Sam.”

Can it be that these stone sculptures represent an ancient people who arrived in Mesoamerica and tried to begin a civilization meant to be created in the image of one that was destroyed in the great cataclysm that brought to an end the Younger Dryas Ice Age? Is this yet another example in the long line of what has been called the Atlantis tradition—one fallen civilization that seeks to begin anew, as was the case in Göbekli Tepe, Mesopotamia, and Egypt?

Enormous basalt heads like this one were a common type of art left behind by the Olmec people.

If so, the early representatives must have failed in their attempts because thousands of years went by before the Mesoamerican experiment finally took hold. By that time, these statues would have been old beyond the imagination of even the early Olmec, but they still would have seemed mysterious, steeped in legend and myth. Perhaps those myths were passed down from one generation to the next, and in them, we hear echoes of the legendary Quetzalcoatl, “a large white man with a flowing beard” who “taught the

people how to live in peace." Eventually, he was forced to depart, but he promised to return.

Sad to say, those words were remembered only too well. When the Spanish conquerors arrived on the scene in the six-teenth century, they were mistaken for the ancient ones—the returning Quetzalcoatl and his followers. This misjudgment would cause irreparable damage to Mesoamerican civilization. Their destruction at the hands of the Spanish was so thorough that history has been forced to register another lost civilization. It appears that now we might never know the ancient story of the Olmec of Mesoamerica.

MAYAN EMPIRE

When it comes to history, most of us know what we know because someone told us a story. If that story came from the lips of a respected teacher or professor or, in many cases, even one who is not respected very much, when it is backed up by what we read in an official textbook and when we are tested on how much we have absorbed and how much we can parrot back before it escapes the confines of our short-term memory banks, it stays with us and becomes part of our worldview. We don't think about it much. It's just something we assume to be true.

However, how did that story become irrefutable historical fact in the first place? Here's where a little-known but ugly truth comes to the surface. It's worth exposing right now, right here.

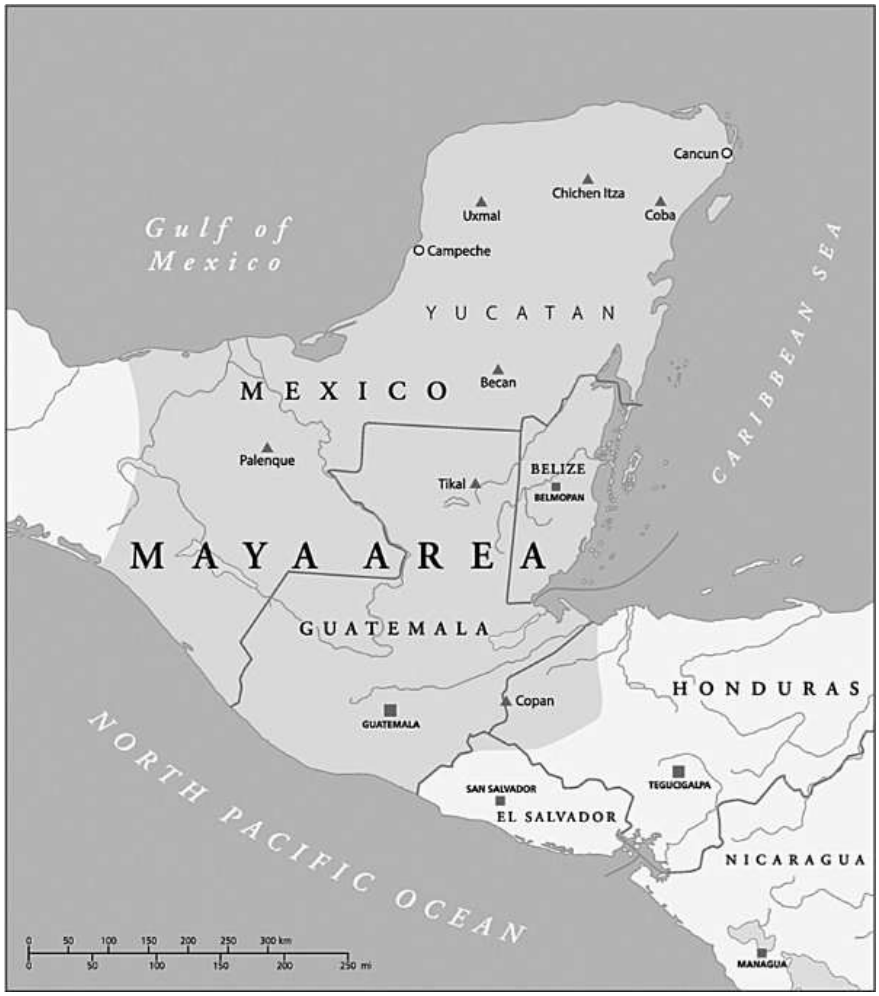
Let's use the case of the Maya civilization as an example. Everyone "knows" that the Maya were a terrifying civilization, steeped in long-range calendars, ball games, pyramids, and human sacrifice. They inherited many of these traits from a culture called the Olmec, frequently called the "mother culture" of Mesoamerica because they gave birth to what became the Maya, Aztec, and Toltec peoples. The Maya flourished between 300 and 950 C.E. and were followed by the Aztec, who were in power when the Spanish arrived.

This is the traditional story. How did we come to view that as fact?

Maya architecture is, indeed, spectacular. Tourists flock to be overwhelmed at the sight of the long, steep stairs and monumental extravagance of ruins such as Tikal or Ceibal (Seibal). When carbon dating and other methods were used to date those structures, traditional history was

cast in stone. Even now, if you look up these magnificent temples in any standard text or Internet site, you will find authoritative statements listing the date of construction and occupation, purpose, general description, and date of demise. It sounds so official that it's hard to argue about whether or not it's all true.

However, Takeshi Inomata, a professor of anthropology at the University of Arizona, had problems with this traditional story. Pyramids as complex and sophisticated as these don't just spring into existence. A civilization doesn't wake up one fine morning and say, "Let's build a pyramid!," so Inomata decided to dig more deeply. He began to excavate under the visible remains at Ceibal to see if evidence existed of earlier building.



The Mayan Empire occupied what is present day Guatemala, Belize, and southernmost Mexico, which overlapped Olmec territory.

What he found was that his predecessors, the ones who wrote the textbooks and composed the traditional story, had drawn their conclusions much too quickly. A more complex story was to be discovered. Inomata decided to ignore what he had been taught and assumed that what we see on the surface is simply a later construction built on the remains of a much earlier ritual site.

Right away, his assumption was rewarded. He found signs of an earlier complex that dated to at least 1000 B.C.E., but that work also was too complex to have just sprung into existence overnight. Hints existed that a larger civilization, much more sophisticated than anyone previously thought, preceded the earlier one as well.

The “Classic” Maya civilization now gave way to the “Preclassic” Maya civilization, a complex time that features evidence of agriculture on a huge scale, complex architecture, and complicated, ritualized daily life. When you eat turkey, corn, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, beans, and squash for your Thanksgiving dinner, thank the Maya. They were the first to cultivate all of them. If you’re fond of chocolate bars containing peanuts, remember that both come from Maya culture. They also gave us chili peppers, vanilla, sunflower seeds, and papaya. If you’re wearing a cotton shirt, that’s a Maya invention. Likewise, if you smoke tobacco of any kind, that, too, was cultivated first by the Maya.

The Maya practiced advanced astronomy and mathematics. They were one of the five civilizations in the world to develop an independent written language on their own, and their calendar skills were surpassed by no other civilization of their time.

Nomads don’t build the kinds of megalithic masterpieces found in the Maya Preclassic Period. That takes more than a village. It takes a thriving, organized, highly technical civilization, and such a civilization doesn’t arise out of nowhere. It takes a long time. Once again, the dates have to be pushed back. Once again, lost secrets arise.

Although archaeologists prefer to stick to information they can dig up, measure, date, and photograph, this new evidence reinforces the need to listen to the people themselves. What does their oral tradition say about the founding of the Maya empire?

Sadly, although the Maya had developed an elaborate written language, most of their texts were destroyed by the early Spanish, who considered them

to be works of the Devil. Thank goodness some of them survived, smuggled away by Catholic priests who maintained a sense of historical importance.

One such text is called the Dresden Codex, so called because it was found in Dresden, Germany. This priceless codex, the oldest surviving text from the Americas, now resides in the Saxon State Library. It is 12 feet (3½ meters) long, folds out like an accordion, and contains references to the original text upon which it is based, which was three hundred to four hundred years older still. When finally translated, it was found to relate local history and a complex set of astronomical tables. Three other such texts are known today, two of them named after the cities where they were rediscovered. They are called the Madrid and Paris codices. The fourth is called the Grolier Codex and resides in New York City.

All other texts were destroyed by the Spanish Inquisition's zeal to stamp out any religion that was considered heretical, but some of them were translated before they could be burned. One that survived is the Quiché Maya Popol Vuh. Although undated, it seems to have been copied down in its final form between 1554 and 1558 C.E. Similar to many religious texts, its subject matter is far more ancient. The early books of the Bible, for instance, were written down long after 1000 B.C.E., but they tell stories that date much further back in time. The Popol Vuh even echoes some of the familiar words of the book of Genesis when it describes the creation of the world. Like Genesis, it is considered to be public domain scripture. Here is a condensation of a translation by Allen J. Christenson:

The Mayans left behind remarkably well-preserved ruins such as the Pyramid of the Magician in Uxmal, Yucatan, Mexico. The Spanish conquerors destroyed many of the Mayan records, sadly, but some were preserved by Catholic priests.

This is the beginning of the ancient people of this place called Quiché. Here we shall write. We shall begin to tell the ancient stories of the beginning, the origin of all that was done in the citadel of Quiché, among the people of the Quiché nation.

First the earth was created, the mountains and the valleys. The waterways were divided, their branches coursing among the mountains. Thus the waters were divided, revealing the great mountains. For thus was the creation of the earth, created then by Heart of Sky and Heart of Earth, as they are called. They were the first to conceive it. The sky was set apart. The earth also was set apart within the waters. Thus was conceived the successful completion of the work when they thought and when they pondered. Then were conceived the animals of the mountains, the guardians of the forest, and all that populate the mountains—the deer and the birds, the puma and the jaguar, the serpent and the rattlesnake, the pit viper and the guardian of the bushes. She Who

> Has Borne Children and He Who Has Begotten Sons then asked: "Shall it be merely solitary, merely silent beneath the trees and the bushes? It is well that there shall be guardians for them," they said. Thus they considered and spoke together, and immediately were created the deer and the birds. Having done this, they then provided homes for the deer and the birds.

In many ways, these words recall the first chapters of the book of Genesis. Indeed, the early Spanish priests, upon hearing these words, wrote about God revealing his truths even to the heathens. Adam and Eve, in the Maya version, have different names, but their stories are similar:

> These are the names of the first people who were framed and shaped: the first person was Balam Quitze, the second was Balam Acab, the third was Mahucutah and the fourth was Iqui Balam. These, then, were the names of our first mothers and fathers.

Unlike Adam and Eve, however, these "first people" seem to have been endowed with superhuman powers:

> Their frame and shape were merely brought about by the miraculous power and the spirit essence of the Framer and the Shaper, of She Who Has Borne Children and He Who Has Begotten Sons, of Sovereign and Quetzal Serpent.… They were able to speak and converse. They were able to look and listen.… Perfect was their sight, and perfect was their knowledge of everything beneath the sky. If they gazed about them, looking intently, they beheld (everything) that was in the sky and that which was upon the earth. Instantly they were able to behold everything. They did not have to walk to see all that existed beneath the sky. They merely saw it from wherever they were. Thus their knowledge became full. Their vision passed beyond the trees and the rocks, beyond the lakes and the seas, beyond the mountains and the valleys.

Anyone who watches television today can identify with the ability to instantly be *able to behold everything. They did not have to walk to see all that existed beneath the sky.* That sounds suspiciously like a modern couch potato armed with a remote.

However, just like their biblical counterparts, these "first people" had ambitions of being like God, and just like Adam and Eve, they got into

trouble because of it when they said: “We have learned everything, great and small.”

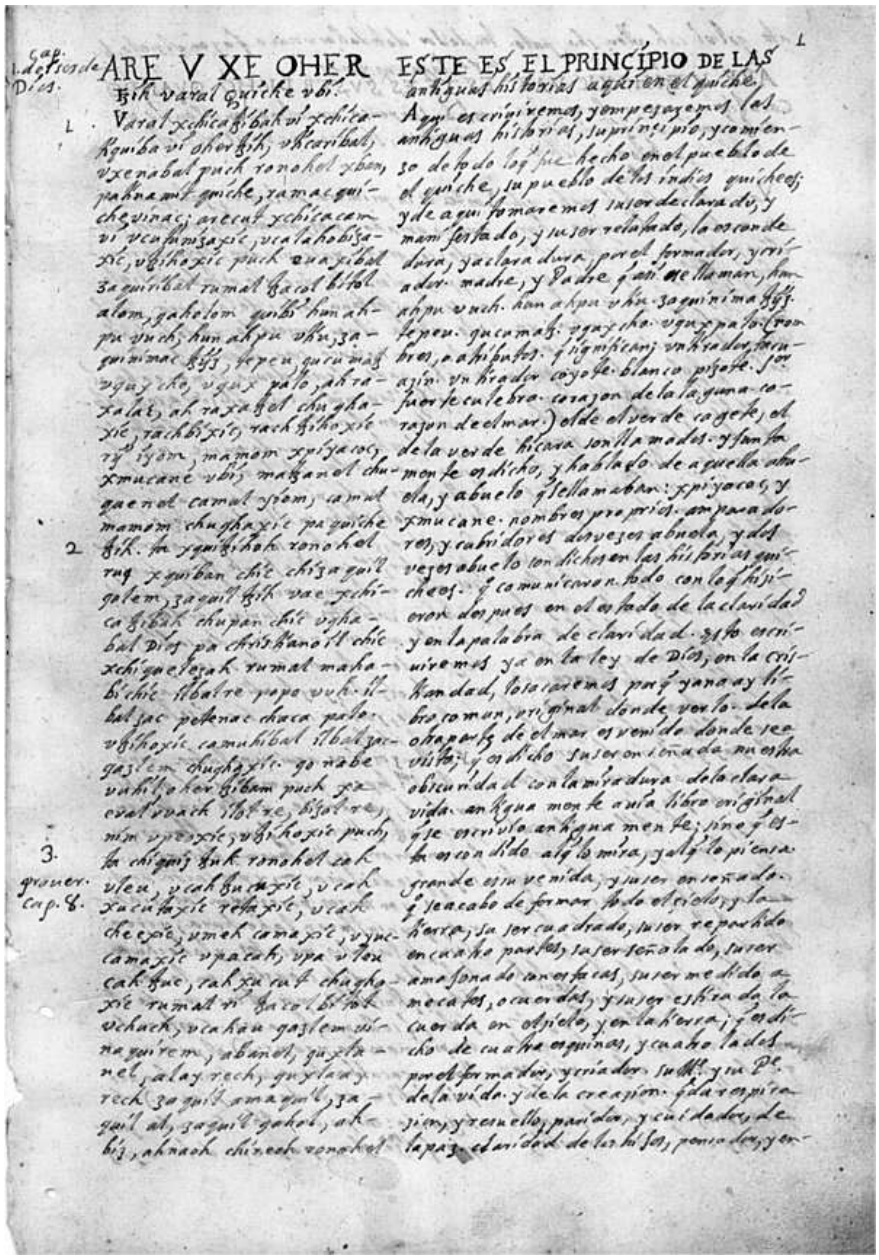
In the Popul Vuh, just as in the Bible, gods don’t like it when humans try to emulate them too much. The powers of the first people brought about their downfall:

> Thus their knowledge was taken back by She Who Has Borne Children and He Who Has Begotten Sons: “What now can be done to them so that their vision reaches only nearby, so that only a little of the face of the earth can be seen by them? For it is not good what they say.… It is a mistake that they have become like gods. Thus their eyes were blinded. They could (now) see only nearby; things were clear to them only where they were. Thus their knowledge was lost.

This is nothing short of amazing. Who were these ancient Mesoamericans who suddenly seemed to have magically sprung into existence? Where did they come from? A civilization such as this needed a long time to develop on its own.

Was it “on its own,” though? Did they have help?

The Maya, like so many civilizations around the world, remembered flood stories similar to those found in Genesis and even earlier in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. It might be said that stories of a universal flood are the glue that holds together the mythologies of every culture known today. The Americas are no different. Flood stories were told by indigenous people from Maine to California. Many deluge epics coincide with the tumultuous end of the Younger Dryas Ice Age about 11,600 years ago. If the Maya stories refer to this flood, their culture is old indeed, and if their civilization began, as appears to be the case in places as far away as Göbekli Tepe, Mesopotamia, and Egypt, when survivors of this cataclysm made their way to Mesoamerica to kickstart the civilization of yet another nomadic people, the Maya suddenly become another in a long line of ancient people who benefited from the wisdom passed down from those survivors. Are the Maya, too, members of what has been called the Atlantis tradition?


ARE V XE OHER ESTE ES EL PRINCÍPIO DE LAS

Francisco Ximénez, O.P., recorded the Popul Vuh in 1701, which is now the oldest surviving written account of Quiché mythology.

Are the Maya a few thousand years old, then? Three thousand years old? How about more than eleven thousand years old? Given this kind of time frame, what we call the Classic Maya Period might very well be the end of a long and distinguished tradition that was in decline perhaps because of drought or overzealous use of resources and had been showing signs of failure for generations.

Does this explain the ritual sacrifice that so tantalizes the imaginations

of people today? Was that whole practice a corrupt, end-time tradition that somehow involved a conservative social elite that wanted to “make Maya great again,” no matter how depraved their methods? It might even have been the Maya who, following the tenants of conservative social movements all over the world, found it expedient to rally the masses by declaring war on an outside enemy. Hence, the destruction of the Olmec empire. Would such a sacrifice of an enemy who was viewed as “other” been that different from Hitler’s sacrifice of six million Jews? Would marching into Olmec La Venta have been any different from sending tanks into Poland or the U.S. Cavalry into Montana?

History, it would seem, repeats itself more often than we would like to believe.

SOUTH AMERICA

AMAZON CITIES IN THE JUNGLE

In 1541, Francisco de Orellana, a close friend and maybe even a cousin of the conquistador Francisco Pizarro, became the first European explorer to successfully travel the length of the Amazon River. Many people of his age and time were obsessed with the legend of the mysterious city El Dorado. Its streets, it was said, were paved with gold.

De Orellana didn't find El Dorado, but he did report seeing large villages, farms, and even cities sprawled along the mysterious river. He carefully charted his journey, documented locations, and delivered his diaries to the proper authorities upon his return to civilization. He was never able to return because he died on a subsequent journey of discovery.

It took centuries for explorers and missionaries to follow up on his information, but when they did, they found nothing but wild tangles of jungle that, to the scientists of his day, could never have supported the kind of

civilization that de Orellana claimed to have seen. His material was declared bogus or, at the very least, mistaken.

Even thirty years ago, it was thought that although the Amazon rainforest was dense and thick with vegetation, the soil itself could never support a vigorous population. It was too poor in nutrients to grow sustainable crops.

Then came the discovery of *terra preta de índio*, which literally means "the dark earth of the Indian" or "superdirt." It's a mixture of charcoal and organic material that is extremely good fertilizer, made by the slash-and-burn method of cultivation used to clear vast acres of natural vegetation, producing organic waste composed of smoldering plant growth, animal bones, and feces. Without exception, wherever these conditions are found, archaeologists find potsherds and signs of human habitation.

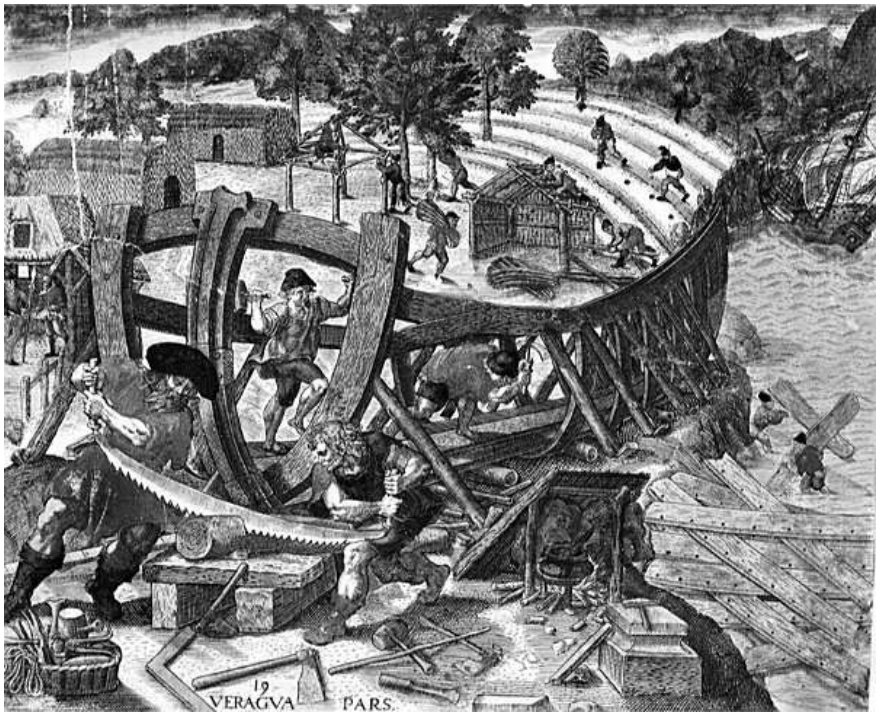
Ten years ago, Michael Palace of the University of New Hampshire decided to use satellite imagery to better understand how extensive superdirt accumulations were in the Amazon region. What he found shocked everybody. It soon became apparent that the region was once home to an immense, lost civilization that no one previously knew existed. Francisco de Orellana was finally vindicated. He was the very first, and the very last, European to visit this civilization.

What had happened to it? Why had it suddenly vanished?

The best guess is that when de Orellana and his crew went ashore for supplies, they infected the local populations with a whole host of European diseases to which the natives had absolutely no natural immunity. Everything from smallpox to tuberculosis to whooping cough was unleashed on the doomed people. Computer models indicate that between five hundred thousand and one million people once lived there—and the area studied covers less than 7 percent of the entire Amazon Basin.

We can only imagine how terrifying it was for the ancient natives. First, they must have been struck dumb by the completely unexpected appearance of foreign-looking Spanish explorers. Then, in a matter of weeks after the visitors departed downriver, villagers began to die by the thousands. In a very short time, no one was left who was healthy enough to aid the survivors. Finally, in a misery of silence, the last one died alone. The rainforest grew back, reclaiming its own. The land returned to what it had been before humans arrived on the scene. Two hundred years later, when explorers finally

came back, they saw no sign of human habitation whatsoever.



De Orellana's men built a small ship called the *San Pedro* to explore the Amazon River. Unfortunately for native peoples, the Spaniards brought diseases that apparently wiped out an entire civilization that lived along the river.

In the March 27, 2018, edition of *National Geographic*, Erin Blakemore reported on an even greater population scattered over a larger area. This time, the discovery came not from satellites orbiting Earth but from renewed, deliberate deforestation brought about by human greed and development.

The Amazon rainforest is so vast and extensive that it serves as a sort of weather machine. Vegetation takes in pollutants and breathes out life-supporting oxygen, acting as "lungs" for the planet. It provides more than 20 percent of the world's oxygen. Natural ingredients found there provide the basis for 25 percent of the world's pharmaceuticals. Seventy percent of plants identified as being effective against cancer are native to the region. At least fifty indigenous tribes, some of whom still don't know the outside world exists, live there. Hundreds of endangered animal species call the Amazon home as well as more than 137 species of endangered plants.

Nevertheless, the Amazon is being ruthlessly destroyed to produce agricultural land and cattle grazing at the rate of 1.5 acres every single second of the day. This is done to provide the world with fast-food hamburgers.

The only good thing to come of this tragedy is that the newly open land has revealed the remains of villages and ceremonial earthworks called geoglyphs. The Amazon is not a pristine wilderness. It was home to a vast, lost civilization that no one suspected was there until a decade ago. The sites have yielded a wealth of ceramic pottery and clues as to how people once lived and thrived before European diseases killed them, leaving only the descendants of survivors who now live a nomadic existence.

More is to come. Models indicate that more than 1,300 geoglyphs and villages are scattered over an area of some 154,000 square miles (400,000 square kilometers) in the southern Amazon alone. Two-thirds of them haven't been found yet, but indications of a connecting infrastructure of roads and paths offer tantalizing clues that point to a once flourishing civilization.

José Iriarte, an archaeologist at the University of Exeter writing for the *National Geographic*, said it very succinctly: "We need to re-evaluate the history of the Amazon."

The question still remains, though. If we don't know this much about the history of our race, what remains yet undiscovered?

The Inca Nation

South America is a mysterious, mystical place. People are living in the rainforest who have only a vague idea, or still don't know, that a totally different world exists beyond their horizon. Recent aerial photographs of an isolated tribe who inhabit the Brazilian rainforest near the border of Peru reveal a people who, for all practical purposes, still live in the Neolithic ("New Stone") Age, an era that officially ended some five thousand years ago.

Brazilian photographer Ricardo Stuckert recently reported on a vibrant community who live in complete isolation. Writing for the December 2016 issue of the *National Geographic* magazine, he said, "To think that in the 21st century, there are still people who have no contact with civilization, living like their ancestors did 20,000 years ago—it's a powerful emotion."

Other mysteries are woven into the fabric of the continent. It is the home of a uniquely South American shamanic culture, yet practitioners share similarities with shamans from North America and Siberia. All have a psychic understanding of the multilayered universe. They use similar

physical techniques to journey into these realms.

A pot of Ayahuasca is prepared that contains plants that, when combined and cooked, are said to imbue the imbiber with the ability to sense hidden realms.

South America is the home of a vibrant Ayahuasca culture whose people, over immense lengths of time extending far back into history, learned to combine certain plants, mixing them into a potent brew that enables users to bypass the normal sensory way of experiencing reality while viewing hidden realms and mystical landscapes.

Very few, if any, medical doctors in the modern world have the technological knowledge of natural pharmaceuticals that shamanic practitioners of South America have passed down through the ages.

Intrigue surrounds the origins of South American civilization as well:

- How is it that Japanese pottery made thousands of years ago wound up in Peru?
- Who built the mysterious ruins of Machu Picchu? How did they accomplish such a feat? Why was it abandoned after only a hundred years, and how did it remain a secret until 1911?
- What’s the story behind the city of Cusco and its Saksaywaman complex? Why was it built in the mountains so far above sea level? For that matter, how was it built?

- The largest Pre-Columbian city in South America was called Chan Chan. It was once the capital of a huge empire that engulfed the entire Peruvian coastline and was home to sixty thousand people. How did it come to be, and why?
- Who built the famous Nazca lines? Did they really serve as a signal to ancient astronauts? If not, what other function could they possibly have had?
- What's significant about the most ancient architectural site in Peru, the sacred city of Caral Supe? It's at least four thousand years old and may be the oldest urban settlement in the Americas, signaling the transition from nomadic lifestyle to complex, hierarchical societies.
- Then there is, of course, the fabled Sacred Valley of the Incas, the Urubamba Valley. It stretches all the way across the Andes, marking the course of the Urubamba River revered by the Incas. Much of its history is now forgotten.
- Chavin de Huántar, once the center of the Chavin society, dates back 3,500 years. It sits up high at an altitude of more than 10,400 feet (3,177 meters) and is thought to be both an agricultural and a ceremonial center. It is home to a gigantic monolith rumored to have been worshipped by an ancient but forgotten people.
- Lake Titicaca is the highest navigable lake in the world, but much of its mystery now lies in ruins beneath the windswept surface.
- Evidence uncovered at Monte Verde in Chile stands in direct confrontation to theories suggesting that people first arrived in America by traveling over the Beringia land bridge twelve thousand years ago. The discovery of stone artifacts and firepits there go back in time least 18,500 years. In 1957, Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl put forth the idea that Polynesia was settled in part by people from South America. When told that ancient Peruvians had no boats that could make the journey across the Pacific, Heyerdahl built one, copied from traditional descriptions using only the materials and tools available to South American adventurers of ancient times. He named it *Kon-Tiki*,

another name for the Inca sun god Viracocha. After he successfully disembarked in Polynesia, no one could ever again say it couldn't have been done.

Archaeologists believe Machu Picchu was not an Incan city but, rather, an estate for the emperor Pachacuti (1438–1472). How the citadel was constructed high in the mountains of Peru is another question.

South America offers all of this history and more. The Inca now capture most of the press and tourist trade, but who came before them? Who were the first people—the ones who set the stage for all this mystery?

The immediate predecessors of the Inca were probably a civilization known as the Huwari (Wari). No one knows much about them. No historical documents exist. Archaeologists, based on very little evidence, argue about what kind of people they were. It is generally thought that the Huwari established a vibrant economic, political, and cultural presence based on a strong military that captured, subjugated, and colonized, much like the Spanish, who were to follow centuries later.

When the end of their civilization came, it wasn’t pretty. Judging from bone and artifacts unearthed from this time, violence was rampant, featuring a lot of head traumas and fatal injuries. Their diet deteriorated, and either

civil war or social breakdown became common. Drought and subsequent starvation stalked the land. A lot of bones display cut marks, signaling either mutilation or even cannibalism.

However, this interpretation of history, outlined in a 2013 archaeological study sponsored by Dartmouth College, just kicks the proverbial can down the road. Where did the Wari come from?

The oldest civilization of South America is usually considered to be the Norte Chico, or the Caral Supe civilization. They are one of the first six independent civilizations in the world and existed at the same time as the traditional dates given for the construction of the Egyptian Pyramids. That puts it back at least five thousand years. Like most civilizations, it grew up along rivers—in this case, the Fortaleza, the Pativilca, and the Supe rivers.

Many sites have been unearthed in this area, but strangely enough, not much is known about the daily life of the people. No pottery and almost no visual art of any kind has been found, but they produced monumental architecture. Platform mounds and sunken, circular plazas abound throughout the region. Supposedly, they must have had a strong system of government to organize and build all this, but those kinds of developments don't just spring up overnight. A sophisticated civilization needs time to develop—so who came before the Caral Supe civilization?

Sometimes, it helps to stop looking and start listening. Rather than depend on the luck of the draw and digging in the right place, why not listen to the people themselves? In this case, the mythology of the Inca.

The people living in what is now Peru and Bolivia remember how it all began. Their mythology, written down years later by Spanish priests whose predecessors had burned all the original documents, tells of a "white man of large stature and authoritative demeanor. He was past his prime, with grey hair … but he spoke to them with love." He brought to them the blessings of civilization. Before he came, say the legends, the land was full of chaos. When he departed across the Pacific—some say he walked on the water, others say he used rafts—he left order and a better life in his wake. His name, they say, was Viracocha, the "Foam of the Sea."

e brought to them the blessings of civilization. Before he came, say

the legends, the land was full of chaos.

Could they be remembering a real person who, as years went by, was glorified in memory and eventually deified? Are we dealing here with yet another example of a survivor from an even earlier tradition such as that of Atlantis who escaped, perhaps, a Caribbean catastrophe? We've already seen that such a cataclysm took place in North America some 11,600 years ago. Just as was the case with the Olmec and the Maya, such an event might very well have marked the genesis of the great South American civilizations.

We're going to go into this in depth when we study the Atlantis tradition, but for now, it is probably a good idea to begin to make note of what seems to be an evolving story. The Olmec, the Maya, and now the Inca are like beads in a chain. When we string enough of them together, a bigger story than we have so far been taught could very well emerge. Hiding behind them all might very well be an ancient, lost civilization.

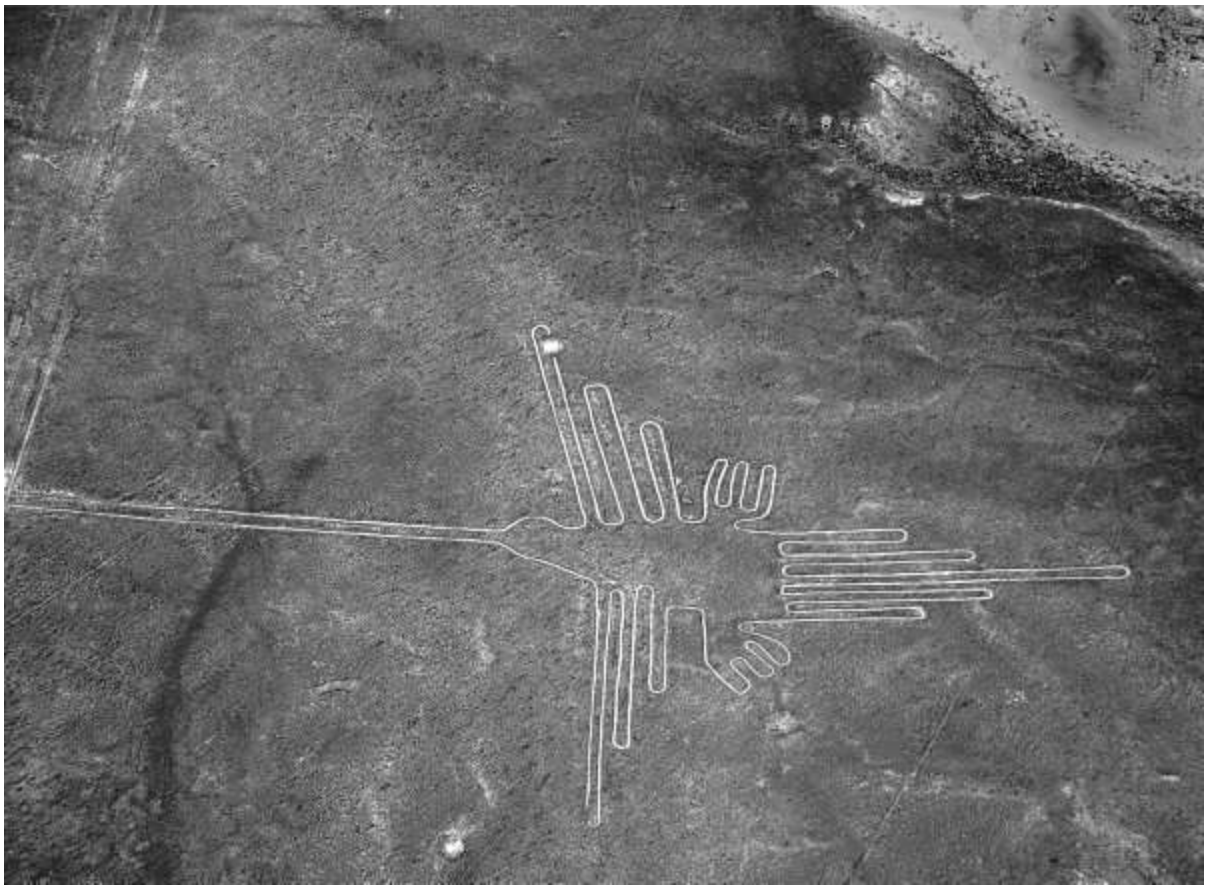
Nazca People of Peru

In 1968, Erich von Däniken wrote a book entitled *Erinnerungen an die Zukunft: Ungelöste Rätsel der Vergangenheit.* The English translation is *Memories of the Future: Unsolved Mysteries of the Past.* When it came time to publish it in America, the title was changed to *Chariots of the Gods? Unsolved Mysteries of the Past*. The basic premise of the book was that ancient aliens visited planet Earth in the remote past. Our distant ancestors, faced with technology that was totally beyond their comprehension, mistook them for gods.

It is safe to say that history took a left turn in 1968, and we've never been quite the same since. Thanks to subsequent books, thousands of articles, and TV shows about ancient aliens, almost everyone today has at least been exposed to the idea that we are not alone in the universe and that we have been and are being visited by those outside our earthly borders. Questions raised by scientists about the laws of physics, the speed of light, and the possibilities of nuts-and-bolts spaceships covering the immense distances required don't stand a chance against testimonies of millions of people who claim to have seen lights in the night sky. How can the great megaliths and

other anomalies existing in the world be explained otherwise?

Of von Däniken's many observations, one that caught the attention of the world at large like no other are the Nazca lines of Peru that, until the invention of air travel, have been hiding in plain sight for thousands of years. Thirteen hundred lines form eight hundred figures in the shapes of animals, spiders, and geometric shapes. Since they are only visible from above, what are they doing high in the mountains of Peru? Of all the explanations that have been put forth, the most likely still seems to be that they were put there to attract ancient aircraft, although the most recent academic theory involves the perpetual ancient need to propitiate the gods responsible for bringing water to Earth.



Among the various figures of the Nazca lines, including a monkey, a spider, and what looks like an astronaut, is this elaborate hummingbird. The only way to see the forms clearly is from the air, which has led people to wonder if the lines are signs for some kind of aircraft.

Near the Nazca lines, on the very same plateau, 6,900 holes have been carved into the bedrock. They form a band about eight to ten holes wide and about a mile long, traversing some of the most rugged terrain anyone would

ever want to cross on foot. Each hole is about 3 feet (1 meter) wide and 3 to 6 feet (1.8 meters) deep. Sometimes, they line up very precisely, but they often appear staggered, with seemingly no pattern at all. When asked why they were first built and who made them, those who now live in the area say they don't have the faintest idea. It was obviously a long, backbreaking job that seems to be unfinished.

The March 2010 *National Geographic Magazine* featured an article about the Nazca lines by Stephen S. Hall. It was called "Spirits in the Sand" and summed up the mystery succinctly:

> Since they became widely known in the late 1920s, when commercial air travel was introduced between Lima and the southern Peruvian city of Arequipa, the mysterious desert drawings known as the Nazca lines have puzzled archaeologists, anthropologists, and anyone fascinated by ancient cultures in the Americas. For just as long, waves of scientists—and amateurs—have inflicted various interpretations on the lines, as if they were the world's largest set of Rorschach inkblots. At one time or another, they have been explained as Inca roads, irrigation plans, images to be appreciated from primitive hot-air balloons, and, most laughably, landing strips for alien spacecraft.

He pointed out that the lines depicting various animals, birds, human beings, and other figures were not even noticed by anyone until the advent of air transportation. They were obviously meant to be seen, as von Däniken pointed out, from the air. You can't climb up a nearby mountain and look down on them. They are already at the top of the mountain range.

Hall is not a believer in the ancient alien theory, however. He dismisses any thoughts of ancient air travel as "laughable," but he does intimate a possible spiritual component to the lines:

> The parched desert and hillsides made an inviting canvas: By simply removing a layer of dark stones cluttering the ground, exposing the lighter sand beneath, the Nazca created markings that have endured for centuries in the dry climate. Archaeologists believe both the construction and maintenance of the lines were communal activities—"like building a cathedral."

His conclusions are very down-to-earth. He thinks the Nazca lines are an elaborate way to provide water to a parched desert land. The effigies are

simply a way to placate various deities who are being asked for help.

It's obvious, however, that such an explanation is offered only because Hall had reached a conclusion that was based primarily on the fact that he didn't believe in extraterrestrial influence. It was yet another example of reaching to extremes to support a preexisting prejudice.

At the very end of the article, however, he returned to spirituality:

> As my footsteps continued around the curves of the spiral, it occurred to me that one of the most important functions of the "mysterious" Nazca lines is no mystery at all. The geoglyphs surely provided a kinetic, ritualistic reminder to the Nazca people that their fate was tied to their environment—its natural beauty, its ephemeral abundance, and its life-threatening austerity. You can read their reverence for nature, in times of plenty and in times of desperate want, in every line and curve they scratched onto the desert floor. When your feet inhabit their sacred space, even for a brief and humbling moment, you can feel it.

This is, in my opinion, the best part of the entire article. In the end, Hall experienced the wonder.

As should we all. The Nazca lines are a captivating mystery. They stand as the work of an enigmatic, lost civilization that felt the need, for reasons unknown, to do something outlandish. The lines were made by a mysterious people whose motivation is now, and perhaps forever, lost in the mists of a forgotten time.

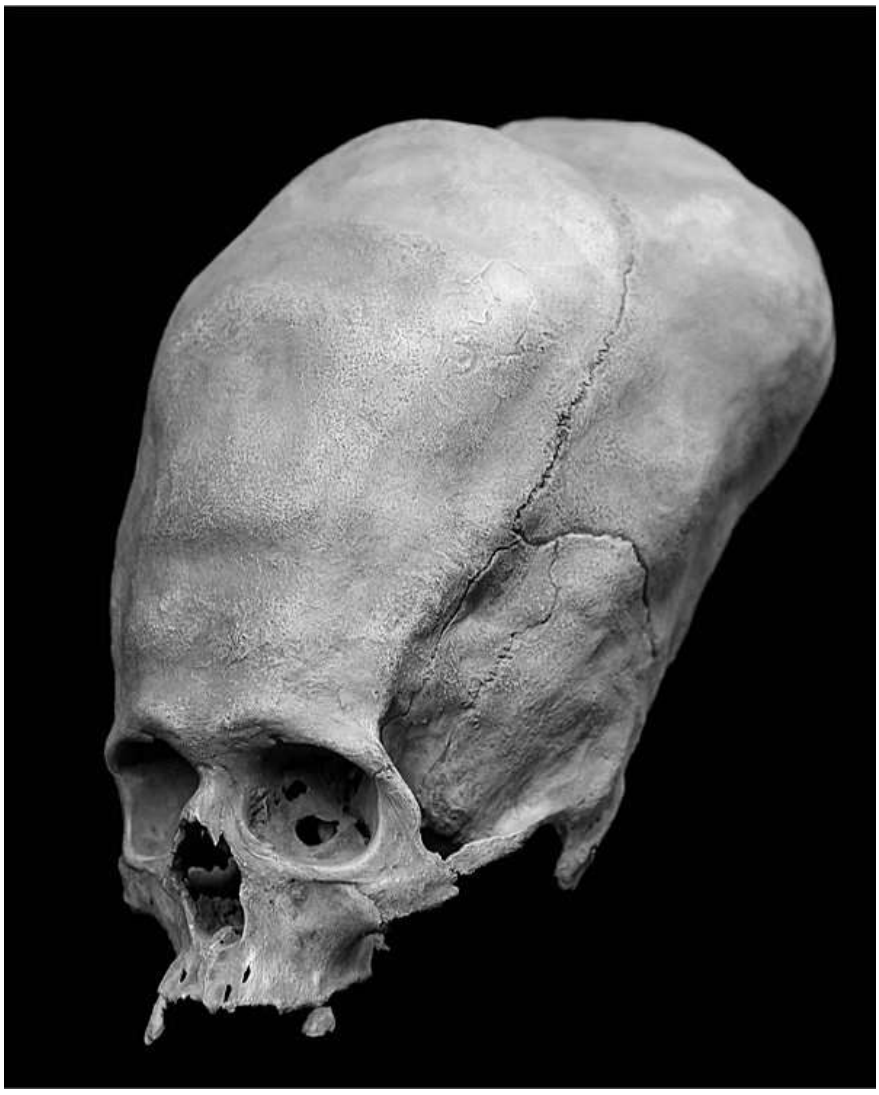
Why did they do it? We just don't know. Of all the theories submitted so far, von Däniken's is as believable as any of them.

The Elongated Skulls of the Paracas People

The Paracas people of Peru may have been the first ones to carve lines into the Nazca plateau. For a thousand years, they lived in this hot, dry climate, until they were defeated by the vigorous Nazca people, who absorbed their culture and customs.

What thrust them into the spotlight, though, was a 1928 discovery of elongated skulls by Julio Tello. Called the Paracas skulls, they sat unnoticed on a shelf until Brien Foerster and David Childress wrote a book about them

in 2012 called *The Enigma of Cranial Deformation.* They claimed to have uncovered DNA results that revealed that the skulls belonged to a species completely divorced from any human antecedent. Because the skulls were found in the same general area as the famous Nazca lines, and because Foerster's coauthor was David Childress of *Ancient Aliens* TV fame, the idea quickly spread that the skulls consisted of an alien species. This immediately opened up the possibility that other mysterious, elongated skulls from around the world were also the result of alien contact.



The practice of ancient people binding infant skulls to deliberately deform them might have been started in an effort to imitate the head formations of their gods.

Their claims were initially met with skepticism. Foerster, at first, would not reveal what DNA lab had done the testing. He claimed that the researcher

wanted to remain silent until more results were in. Foerster led a tour called "Hidden Inca Tours: Exploring Ancient Peru & Beyond," and critics accused him of simply drumming up publicity. They thought that he and Childress shouldn't have published a book with such groundbreaking claims without first submitting their research to at least some peer review, especially because, given Childress's success on the *Ancient Alien* television shows and his need to fill up more and more time slots with more and more ancient alien theory speculations, the eyes of the commercial world would be on them both.

Despite all this negative Internet publicity and jealousy stemming from some

successful TV shows, the elongated skulls remain mysterious. Are they proof of a long-lost and forgotten ancient civilization?

The fact that some of the skulls are artificially caused by tightly wrapping the heads of growing infants makes people wonder if ancient folks who lived in Peru were trying to imitate the physical characteristics of those they considered to be gods. Elongated skulls are not limited to Peru. They can be found in Egypt and other civilizations scattered around the globe. This makes critics ask if, for whatever bizarre reasons, humans somehow decided it would be a good thing to change the appearance of their offspring. Others believe that an elongated head is a genetic anomaly that appears in some human children.

Whatever the answers may someday prove to be, the questions cannot be ignored. Once again, we are forced to ask why? When? How? Like so many other questions, they may go unanswered for a long while. As we have said so often, we may never know.

BOLIVIAN ENIGMAS

Thirteen thousand feet above sea level, high in the Bolivian mountains southeast of Lake Titicaca, stand the mysterious, megalithic ruins of Puma Punku and the world-famous archaeological site called Tiahuanaco. The whole complex predates the Inca civilization. No one alive today knows for sure how and when it was built—or, for that matter, why.

Massive, red, sandstone blocks that weigh more than eighty tons have been cut to perfection and moved to their present locations. How? Any kind

of construction that far above the tree line is difficult to imagine without creating rollers and blocks of some kind. Even if trees were imported and employed in building, anything that heavy would quickly grind them to sawdust. Besides the transportation problem, the andesite stone used in parts of the construction is hard, igneous rock that cannot be worked by the copper tools, or even iron tools, for that matter, available to the people of ancient times. Builders would have needed power tools at the very least.

No wonder those who believe in ancient alien visitation point to this site over and over again as proof that we have been visited by extraterrestrial, advanced builders. It's hard to imagine any other explanation. The perfectly cut, stone doorways and huge blocks exhibit no tool marks at all, yet they interlock with precision. Modern radiocarbon dating places the time of construction at about 500 to 600 C.E., but those dates are challenged by many experts. After all, since you can't radiocarbon date stone, who is to say that any organic material thus sampled isn't a much newer intrusion? As a result, scholars vary in their dating by as many as seventeen thousand years.

Puma Punka in Bolivia is part of the Tiahuanaco site, which marks the place where the Incans believed the world was created.

The oldest dates are derived from the theory that the temple site serves as a giant clock. On the day of the Spring Equinox, the Sun rises over the center of the temple through a stone archway. Then, as the year proceeds, it

appears to move gradually along the horizon. If you go back in time about seventeen thousand years, the astronomical measurements fall into place, matching up precisely with the two great cornerstones on either side of the temple.

The same kind of measurement has been observed at places such as Egypt and Göbekli Tepe. In order for the astronomy to work out, astronomers need to figure out exactly when everything on the ground would have mirrored everything in the heavens. With modern computers, this is easy to do. Software has been designed that is available for use on any home computer, but in ancient times, it would have taken a considerable amount of time, in some cases thousands of years, to develop such a highly accurate system.

How determined do people have to be to wait even a year to see if their measurements work out, let alone waiting out time periods that are measured over hundreds of years? Without help from the outside, it's hard to imagine that kind of dedication. Can you imagine the disappointment of an astronomer who waited for years to make sure the Sun rose exactly where he predicted it would on the day of the Spring Equinox only to wake up to a cloudy morning on that day?

Why was the whole thing so important? Archaeologists glibly issue pronouncements such as "It was important for an agricultural society to know when to plant their crops," but that's patently ridiculous. Farmers know when to plant in the spring. They don't need to spend generations moving megaton boulders up the mountains for that.

The plain and simple truth is that no one knows why they did it. The fact *that* they did it is obvious, but when it comes to *why*, the answer is anyone's guess. They must have had a powerful motivation, but what was that motivation?

It's important for us to try to answer that question. We live in a world that often seems to be without purpose and direction. We are all familiar with the phrase "rat race." All of us know the experience of getting up in the morning, heading off to a meaningless job, and wondering why we bother. Discovering a motivation strong enough to endure over the centuries it took to build Puma Punku might go a long way toward alleviating our despair.

Was it religiously motivated? It must have been a powerful religion.

Was it inspired by a spiritual connection we have forgotten? I'd love to experience that type of spirituality.

Did they know something we don't about our place in the cosmos? Wouldn't that be nice to discover!

Does the whole complex represent a theory of being that we just don't understand? If so, we need to recapture it.

The Inca believed that their god, Viracocha, created ancestral people of all ethnic backgrounds and sent them out into the world to populate their respective lands. Everywhere they went, they were commissioned to establish holy places to serve as the center of a particular civilization. Puma Punku, according to the Inca, is such a place. If so, then we can infer that Göbekli Tepe, the Giza Plateau, Sumer, and other such centers around the world are others.

Once again, we encounter the belief that survivors of a previous civilization, the "gods" of our ancestors, spread out to recreate what they once knew before the collapse of their way of life. This is a central origin myth. It says that ours is not the first civilization. What we call "the beginning" is really a "*re*-beginning." This concept is found universally in culture after culture. We didn't *invent* civilization. We didn't even *discover* it. We *inherited* it. We were *taught* it.

If this proves to be the case, it's not too late for us to learn and avoid becoming just another in a long line of civilizations that blindly fell in line and, either through natural forces or because of its own hubris, brought about yet another end in the unending cycle.

NORTH AMERICA

THE CLOVIS CULTURE

If you ever attended a college class in history or anthropology, you were no doubt told a story that is so ingrained in the American psyche that until recently, it has simply been accepted as orthodox, unquestioned truth. It goes something like this:

The most modern, up-to-date geological studies show that glaciers once covered the northern regions, ranging downward from the pole as far as what is now the central part of the United States. They effectively cordoned off North America from any human contact.

The idea that the human race had begun in the Fertile Crescent's Garden of Eden is now outdated. According to new information, we began in Africa and spread out from there eventually to inhabit land from Africa in the south to Asia in the east and Europe in the west. This is called the "Out of Africa" theory or the "African Eve" theory. Because the glaciers locked up so much

water, sea levels were lower than they are now. As a result, a thousand-mile-wide land bridge, called Beringia, connected Siberia to Alaska.

With the coming of a milder climate, the ice slowly began to melt. A corridor opened up between two great, Canadian glacial systems, allowing humans to follow migrating herds of mammoths and other now-extinct species right into the heart of the virgin American continent. Because the great, lumbering megafauna had never encountered humans before, the hunting was so good that human predation, coupled with a continuing series of climate fluctuations and resultant habitat changes, caused the extinction of those great species.

The fact that humans were efficient hunters was verified because a sample of their primary weapon was found near Clovis, New Mexico, in association with an ancient mammoth kill. The weapon consisted of a highly efficient, fluted spear point named after the location of the find—the famous Clovis point, or, more accurately, Paleo-Indian projectile point. Bones from the kill were carbon dated and found to be about eight thousand years old. That coincides with the time of the most recent ice-free corridor between Asia and the Americas and was only a short time before mammoths went extinct. Because this was the earliest clear indication of human activity in America, it was assumed that these were the first people to enter the North American continent.

It’s an elegant, simple theory that links together an accredited archaeological find in New Mexico, a certified ice-free corridor in Canada, and the extinction of some ancient, North American animal species. “Clovis First” became the archaeological gospel. Henceforth, disputing Clovis First was a surefire way to get laughed out of the archaeology club. Humans migrated to North America from Siberia about eight thousand or, possibly, if you’re liberal, up to thirteen thousand years ago, give or take a century or two. Case closed and on to the next subject.

Asia and North America were connected by a land bridge due to the lower sea levels of the Ice Age. People crossed from Asia into North America via this bridge (Beringia) about 20,000 years ago and continued to do so for thousands of years.

The field of archaeology, however, just like religion and politics, breeds fundamentalism. A fundamentalist is one who accepts the so-called fundamentals of the faith and then shuts his or her mind to any other possibilities. In this case, the fundamentalists couldn't answer some nagging problems— problems that refused to be swept under the academic rug.

A few archaeological sites—notably in Chile, Pennsylvania, Virginia, South Carolina, and most recently in California—did not conform to fundamentalist guidelines. Reputable archaeologists at those sites seemed pretty confident that they were dealing with material much older than a mere eight thousand to thirteen thousand years old. Although they were openly ridiculed, they persevered. Doubts began to arise.

Despite the evidence of antiquity, archaeologists still can't answer an important question. If people were in America before the glaciers melted, how did they get there? The Ice Age is a given, so they couldn't have circumnavigated the glaciers on foot, yet these people wound up in a Chilean cave, a Pennsylvania overhang, and a site overlooking the Savannah River in South Carolina. In order to walk over from Siberia, they would have had to

have come during the previous ice-free corridor, but that was a whole lot earlier than eight thousand or even ten thousand years ago. The only other way would have been to use boats, and until very recently, that was thought to have been impossible.

The South Carolina dig that caused such a furor in the archaeological community is called the Topper Site. Dr. Albert Goodyear, now retired, was a much-respected archaeologist at the University of South Carolina. He had been uncovering lots of Clovis tools and artifacts at the site, so in 1998, moved by discoveries in Pennsylvania and Virginia, he decided to dig a little deeper.

What he found shook the world of archaeology to the very core. He had, until then, subscribed wholeheartedly to the "Clovis First" doctrine, but in strata dated to at least thirty-five thousand years ago, perhaps even fifty thousand years ago, by no less an authoritative laboratory than the distinguished University of California at Irvine, he discovered what appeared to be human-made, stone artifacts and Paleolithic debitage. That's the detritus left over from chipping, or knapping, stone tools.

The *Science Daily* report of November 18, 2004, immediately dubbed Topper "the oldest radiocarbon-dated site in North America." Sites equally as old are in Brazil and Chile. Perhaps a site in Oklahoma suggests that humans were present in the Western Hemisphere as early as thirty thousand to sixty thousand years ago, but Topper began to attract the most attention because so many archaeologists and institutional representatives traveled there to check it out, drawn by the impeccable scientific protocols Goodyear had set in place.

The Stafford Research Laboratories in Boulder, Colorado, double-checked the evidence by collecting burnt plant remains from the same levels as the early artifacts. Carbon from this kind of material can be dated with standard, accepted, scientifically verified techniques.

Their verdict? 50,300–51,700 years old.

Anything this old seemed to be a candidate for a pre-Clovis civilization, perhaps a people who evolved into Clovis, but who were they, and where did they come from?

One good candidate is a civilization we discussed earlier. It's called the Solutrean culture. They lived in northern Spain and southern France. The art

and the remnants these people left behind in firepits indicate that they were hunting and eating deep-sea fish and mammals. For that kind of activity, they needed boats. Recent studies of glacial activity indicate that with lower sea levels, caused by an almost unimaginable amount of water tied up in frozen glaciers, it would have been entirely possible for them to make the trip right along the face of a broken glacier from their home in southern France to North America, ending up roughly where Chesapeake Bay is today. Evidence on this side of the ocean corroborates this because they seem to have brought their pre-Clovis technology with them. More than four hundred Clovis sites have been found within a hundred miles of Washington, D.C., but only a few dozen have been found in all of the Rocky Mountain West. Clearly, the center of Clovis culture was in the East, not the West.

The development of Clovis points from Solutrean technology can be traced, if you have a good eye and a lot of academically trained imagination, in projectile points from France and Spain.…

What happened to the evidence of boats, though? Why haven't we found any? The answer is simple when you think about it. At that time in history, the Grand Banks, now two hundred miles off the coast of Labrador, marked the edge of the continent. When the people landed, they certainly didn't go to the trouble of dragging their craft two hundred miles inland just to satisfy future archaeologists. When the boats deteriorated beyond use, they left them on the shore where, as sea levels rose, they were eventually drowned under hundreds of feet of water.

These first immigrants were pre-Clovis people. The underlying technology from which the Clovis culture evolved cannot be traced back to Siberia. Siberians used a completely different technology involving microchips attached to grooved, bone blades. The ancestral technology to the Clovis can only be found in the European Solutrean culture. On the west coast of northern Spain and southern France, stone artifacts have been collected and classified for generations. Although they don't look exactly like Clovis points, the method of manufacturing them, a technique called bifacial knapping, is identical, so the art of the Clovis points, featuring elongated

flutes along each side of the point, seems to have developed right here in America. Perhaps the Clovis point was the very first American invention. The development of Clovis points from Solutrean technology can be traced, if you have a good eye and a lot of academically trained imagination, in projectile points from France and Spain compared to points found in Pennsylvania, Virginia, North Carolina, and other places.

What happened to these people after they had settled here for a few thousand years and developed such a rich, big-game hunting way of life? Did they just hunker down and evolve along normal social developmental lines, eventually becoming Cherokee Indians?

Alas, it was not to be. The latest evidence points to a disruptive visitor from outer space that ended what was a promising future.

The great glacial system still existed up north. Water melting from its massive bulk every summer flowed down through the Mississippi River system and eventually out to the Gulf of Mexico. Meanwhile, normal ocean currents in the Atlantic carried cold water from the north first east to Europe and then south, where it was warmed in the lower equatorial latitudes before traveling north again, up the coast of North America, where it was cooled in the northern latitudes, thus keeping the great Atlantic conveyor system moving.

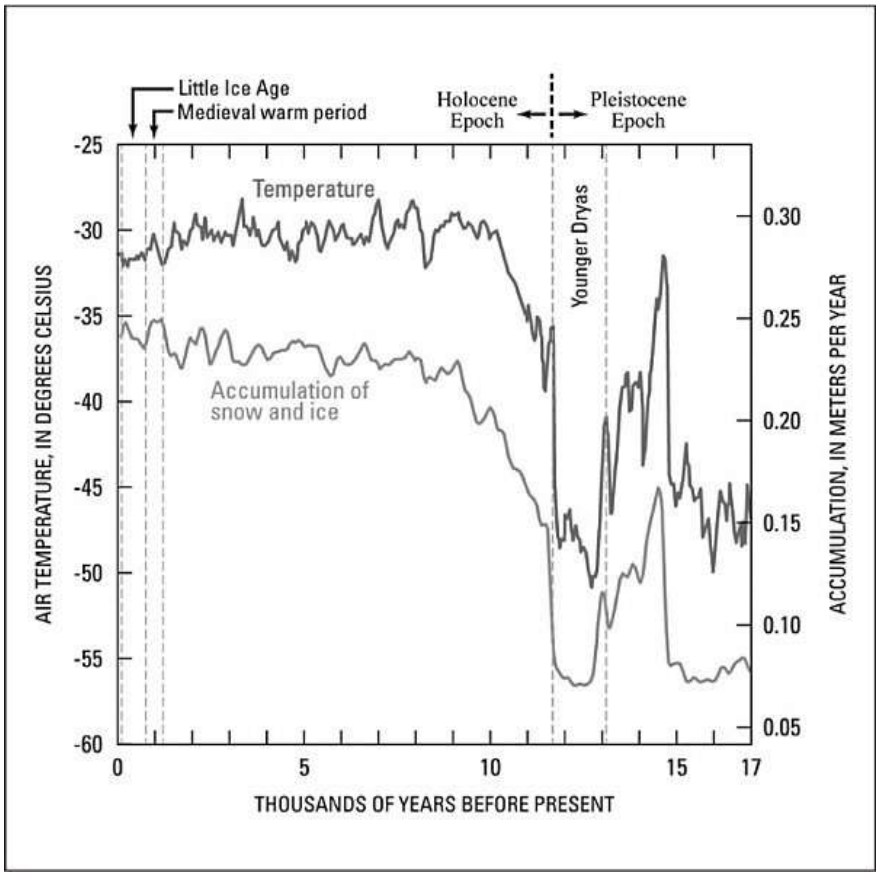
However, according to geophysicist Dr. Allen West, that all changed rather drastically one day about 12,800 years ago when what was probably a giant, segmented comet plummeted down to Earth, four of its segments landing in North America somewhere up in Canada on the glacier itself north of the Great Lakes. Dr. West found, at every Clovis site he examined from the U.S.– Mexican border way up into Canada and from California to South Carolina, the answer to three great questions that have puzzled archaeologists for years:

- What happened to the Clovis culture? Why did it end so abruptly?
- Why did North American megafauna such as mammoths, mastodons, saber-toothed cats, camels, and giant sloths along with many more species suddenly go extinct?
- What caused the sudden, great climate change called the Younger Dryas, a cold, dry, and extremely disruptive event that lasted for

more than a thousand years?

What he discovered were nanodiamonds.

This subject is fraught with controversy and is highly technical. Many traditional archaeologists dispute and refute the evidence, but the academic field of archaeology changes slowly. It will probably take years for this theory to be fully accepted, but suffice it to say that what Dr. West found—nanodiamonds— at similarly dated sites throughout the continent was something that can only come from outer space and is associated with a comet event similar to the one that wiped out the dinosaurs sixty-five million years ago. That event left a huge crater in the Yucatán Peninsula. Dr. West and his team of colleagues propose that a comet, captured by Earth's gravitational pull, broke apart and plunged to Earth only 12,800 years ago.



By analyzing ancient ice in Greenland, scientists were able to determine changes in temperature and snowfall over the centuries. This graph shows a steep drop in temperatures and snow accumulation during the Younger Dryas period some 12,500 years ago.

Where is the crater left over from that collision?

The answer at that time was that if the comet hit the Laurentide glacier, any crater would have melted away long ago, when the Ice Age ended, but now, another answer might be possible.

On November 14, 2018, mainstream media reports announced the discovery of a massive meteorite crater buried a mile beneath the Greenland ice cap, visible only through newly studied satellite photographs. Although traditional scientists, being a conservative lot by nature, don't want to make any pronouncements until drilling samples can offer conclusive proof of age, some of them are referring to this impact as the Younger Dryas Crater. That's a hopeful sign. If the dates signal an impact in the vicinity of twelve thousand years ago, many of them who refused to acknowledge the Younger Dryas comet hypothesis will be forced to change their opinions.

If the hypothesis proves to be correct, the resulting catastrophic conditions are almost unimaginable. The very latest evidence may even indicate that fragments from this meteor stream continued to bombard the earth on and off over a period of twenty years. The explosions alone must have generated enough heat to kill all the animals within range of the event, but the ensuing fires, dust storms, winds, and smoke would have devastated much of the continent. The chances are good that it also broke off the ice dam that kept glacial melt from flowing out of the St. Lawrence River into the North Atlantic.

When cold, heavy, glacial water was able to flow east into the Atlantic as well as south into the Gulf of Mexico, Earth suddenly entered into another glacier age that lasted for more than a thousand years. Worldwide climate change occurred suddenly, almost overnight.

The burning biomass left behind what is called a black mat, which is visible today on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay and in locations around the world. Below that black mat, you can find Clovis points and artifacts but then nothing except for a foot or so of dust and grit. No human artifacts at all are found in this layer. Finally, after more than a thousand years went by, new people came back to the now habitable region. These late arrivals are the ancestors of today's Eastern Indian tribes, but the Clovis people, along with the prey that sustained them, had disappeared.

iven fifty thousand years or more of history in America, they could

Gvery well be behind many of the mysterious archaeological and mythological enigmas found throughout the continent.

Had they? Their technology had evolved. With the megafauna gone, hunting techniques and tools changed with the times, but was that because the people no longer survived—or had they evolved as well? If the Clovis civilization did indeed evolve from the Solutrean, the Folsom from the Clovis, and many American Indian tribes from the Folsom, that meant that these were versatile people. Given fifty thousand years or more of history in America, they could very well be behind many of the mysterious archaeological and mythological enigmas found throughout the continent. With the continuous supply of foreign ideas, customs, and even DNA immigrating in from both coasts, mixing, matching, and evolving, it might be said that Clovis was only one step in a vast civilization that has been growing since the arrival of the first pioneers. If this is the case, it seems as though America really is a country of immigrants with a history that goes back a long way, indeed.

ALBANS OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC

Farley Mowat writes so well that it's easy to fall in love with the ideas he presents in his books even if he himself admits that he is surmising a lot. In the foreword to his 1998 book, *The Farfarers: Before the Norse,* he quotes Edward Gibbons: "I owe it to myself and to historic truth to declare that some circumstances … are founded only in conjecture and analogy." Nevertheless, he presents a compelling bit of research, based on some good circumstantial evidence, that a lost civilization of commercial crofters—he calls them Albans—once migrated across the north Atlantic from western Europe and, over centuries, developed a trade network that spread all the way to eastern Canada, thereby founding what he calls "the earliest European settlement in America."

It's a compelling story based on hard evidence interspersed with entertaining conjecture.

According to Mowat's research, centuries before the Norse arrived in North America, enterprising hunters from the British Isles followed the

walrus ivory trade, tracking their prey ever westward to what we now know as the Canadian Arctic and Newfoundland. Each year when the weather closed in for the winter, they would build stone house foundations, roofing them over with their overturned boats. Then, with the arrival of spring, they would return with a full cargo to sell to productive European markets. This is his way of explaining the stone foundations of northeast Canada. They are everywhere, but archaeologists are slow to call them house foundations because of the lack of roofing material for posts and beams. No trees grow in that vicinity. According to Mowat, the houses have no roofs because the hunters sailed away in them.

Canadian author Farley Mowat speculated in his *The Farfarers* that people called the Albans journeyed to places like Iceland and Labrador before the Vikings, leaving behind evidence such as this longhouse stone foundation in Iceland.

It’s a simple theory and a compelling one.

Eventually, the Albans left Europe altogether, forced out by the coming of Norse marauders who preyed on them first in Britain, then Iceland (Tilli), then Greenland (Crona), and all the way west to Canada, where most of the roofless house structures have been found.

They were a peaceful folk, who had to compete first with the Keltoi (Celts), who eventually drove the Albans out of Britain, then Viking warriors, who followed them even farther. After generations of such persecution, they were eventually assimilated by the natives of the eastern shores of North America.

Spending a long winter huddled under an overturned boat sounds like a terrible way to live, but Mowat disagrees. In his words:

> We southerners tend to envisage winter in the Arctic as a dread and miserable time of cold and famine, but for the early dwellers there, winter would normally have been a relaxed and enjoyable season largely spent visiting, feasting, singing, making tools and clothing, making love, and sleeping as long as one chose. If people felt cramped in their small houses they could go out on the lake and fish through the ice.

To listen to him tell it, it sounds like fun. It also opens up a host of possibilities that might answer mysteries further south along the East Coast of America.

Just south of Awendaw, South Carolina, in the Francis Marion National Forest, is an example of a type of structural artifact that still baffles archaeologists. For every explanation someone offers up, many more refute it.

Five thousand years ago, a people lived by the sea who, in various locations along America's southeastern seaboard, piled up millions upon millions of clam and oyster shells in the shape of either a circle or U-shaped formation measuring, in some cases, more than two hundred feet across and ten to twelve feet high. The usual place of construction was on estuaries, which were rich in marine resources.

Piling up shells in a mound was common throughout ancient times. Such remains are called middens and are quite abundant. Basically, they are garbage dumps. People would feast on clams, mussels, or oysters and then throw the shells on a pile.

Nothing special there, but from the Sewee Shell Ring in South Carolina, running down around the tip of Florida, the people didn't just make mounds of shells. They shaped these mounds very carefully into doughnut shapes.

The question is, why? They continued the practice for a few thousand years and then stopped. No one knows the reason. It seems to be a custom practiced by a particular people who lived at a particular time in a rather small geographical area, most of which is in the coastal plain of South Carolina and Georgia, spilling down into Florida.

Currently, three interpretations exist:

- The first is that these rings represent early settled communities or villages. Because the people stayed in one place for a long time,

their refuse piles got bigger and bigger each year. Some archaeologists believe that the people lived in the center and were forced to move out and away as the circle threatened to close out their village sites.

- The second explanation says that shell rings are seasonal, ceremonial sites where people gathered to feast, gossip, share experiences, marry off their new crop of youngsters, perhaps play games, and generally keep connected. This might explain the circular aspect of the rings. Maybe people danced or otherwise communed in a ring.
- The third explanation combines the first two and adds a twist. This theory holds that the rings are actually memorial in nature. The Mound Building cultures later constructed such projects with dirt and clay. Maybe these folks used what was convenient for them—shells. In other words, this theory is held by those who want to cover all the bases. Buried within the mounds are the remains of animals such as deer and other four-footed critters, acorns from the numerous live oaks that grow in profusion in the area, and fish species from both salt and fresh water, but little evidence exists of human burials.

Parts of all these theories may be true, but something seems to be missing. For one thing, why are the rings found only at seashore sites? Inland middens from the same time period abound, but those are not piled in such careful circles. Middens play a crucial role at other shoreline sites up and down the coast. Chesapeake Bay, for instance, yields a rich source of regional artifacts from middens, but again, the piles are not shaped like these.

The timing is suspicious, too. The custom seems to begin and end rather suddenly at a specific time. The earliest rings are about five thousand years old. The latest are about three thousand years old. In other words, the culture seems to have lasted about two thousand years, but this may be deceptive. One of the oldest rings is found off the coast of Florida in St. Lucie County. It’s fifteen to twenty feet underwater and was built about 4,800 years ago. Sea levels were lower then, so it could be that the culture goes back even further in time, but the earlier evidence was destroyed by rising seas.

What is most intriguing about these rings is the shape, the location, and the timing of their construction. Why circles, why on the seashore in this

particular latitude, and why five thousand to three thousand years ago?

Some of the shells found at the Sewee Shell Ring near Awendaw, South Carolina. One theory is that the shells are just waste strewn about what was once a circular village.

Here's a theory that begins in Europe more than five thousand years ago. The megalithic tradition of the British Isles and Brittany had begun centuries earlier and would culminate with the great edifice at Stonehenge. One of the hallmarks of this tradition was stone circles, sometimes featuring a central monolith or standing stone. Their purpose is still illusive but seems to be of religious importance. More than four thousand such monuments were built during this time, of which more than one thousand still stand from the Highland region of northeast and central Scotland, the Lake District and southwest peninsula of England, north and southwest Ireland, and the Basque sections of the European continent. Although the stone rings were of various sizes depending on landscape and local geology, many were roughly the same size as the shell rings of the North American southeast coastal plain,

which often featured a prominent central “monolith” made of stone and earth. The only difference was that the North American circles were made of shells, not stone.

Of course, no stones of any size were to be found along the South Carolina/Georgia/Florida coast, so what if Farley Mowat’s ancient, seafaring Albans from western European seacoasts actually made their way to the coast of what we now call North America? What if they sailed down that coast just to see what was over the horizon? What if, like millions of people have done since, they fell in love with the weather and decided to stay? What if, like immigrants everywhere, they chose to remember and practice the religion of the old country they had left behind by building similar, familiar “temple” monuments? They couldn’t use stone because none were to be found on these long, sandy beaches, so they used whatever materials were close at hand. After all, it wasn’t the building material that was important. It was the shape, the size, and the location. All it would take to begin the tradition was one oldtimer saying, “Instead of throwing these clamshells in a heap, let’s pile them up in a circle like we used to do back in the old country!”

Let’s take some objections one by one and see what we can do with them.

Did ancient Europeans have boats?

Of course, they did—and they were good ones, too. Ample evidence exists that “islands” such as Australia were settled by boat at least three thousand years ago, and new findings may push that date back at least fifteen thousand years, long before the building of the shell rings. Sailors from India were venturing out on the open seas at least five thousand years ago. The famous “Dover Bronze Age Boat” crossed the English Channel 3,500 years ago. Farley Mowat makes a good case that Northern Islanders from Shetland, Orkney, and the Hebrides were venturing out on the ocean in skin boats at least four thousand years ago, and in one of the most controversial archaeology books of recent times, *Across Atlantic Ice*, Dennis Stanford and Bruce Bradley make the case that fishermen from the Solutrean culture of southern France and Spain made the dangerous North Atlantic crossing, following the Arctic ice shelf, at least thirty-five thousand and maybe even fifty thousand years ago!

Don’t disparage skin boats. They were probably made of walrus hides stretched over a wooden frame and covered in pitch. They could carry a full

crew of at least twenty, sometimes many more. By the time of Julius Caesar, even the Romans feared the Celtic navy, which was still using skin boats in favor of wood. They could outmaneuver Caesar's navy, sail in a light breeze, strike fast, and be gone before the heavy Roman vessels even got their oars out. The old building tradition is so long-standing that even today, the fiberglass, metal, or wood hull of a modern boat is called its "skin."

But how could "primitive" people cross the North Atlantic ice pack so soon after the Glacial Age retreated north?

Stanford and Bradley cover this one pretty thoroughly in their Solutrean Thesis. Suffice it to say that the ocean levels were lower, the continental shelf extended all the way out to the Georges Bank, seafood was plentiful, and it would have been more a process of "island hopping" all the way across than venturing forth on open seas. They could pick and choose their sailing days and stay in port during heavy weather. At this time in history, the people would probably have hit the American continent that we are familiar with somewhere along the Delmarva Peninsula, but even five thousand years ago, it would have been a rather easy and delightful sail from there down the coast to the pleasant beaches of the Southeast. It's interesting that bifacial projectile points have been dredged up in fishing nets two hundred miles off the present East Coast.

What about DNA evidence?

This is a tough one. Aside from one controversial study, ancient European DNA is distinctly absent from American indigenous cultures. It might be that immigrants from the east were so few in number that they were simply absorbed by the native culture of the East Coast and swallowed up by the existing population. Most of the seafarers were probably male sailors, and usually female mitochondrial DNA is tested when doing long-distance studies such as this.

Where are the boats? How come archaeologists haven't found any?

They were covered over and destroyed by rising sea levels. Let's use some imagination and try to visualize what might have happened. Perhaps one boat, perhaps a small fleet of ten or so, followed the North Atlantic islands from the Hebrides across to Iceland, Greenland, and Labrador, then down past Newfoundland to Maine and south past Chesapeake Bay to the Outer Banks and eventually Florida. The weather was terrific and just kept getting better. Plenty of food and fresh water were available wherever they

disembarked. We know that at this time, sophisticated Native Americans were living as far south as Windover, Florida, and had been there for at least a thousand years. Evidence reveals that these folks had already invented looms to make cloth, so the Europeans probably met friendly natives along the route. They would have traded and spent time together, learning how to communicate and share information. Maybe they even intermarried. Sailors, you know, have a certain reputation.

By the time of Julius Caesar, even the Romans feared the Celtic navy, which was still using skin boats in favor of wood.

When it came time to head home, at least some of the immigrants must have said, “Why? We like it here!” If you compare the climate of South Carolina with Greenland, Iceland, and the Outer Hebrides, you really can’t blame them. A few sticks-in-the-mud might have sailed home to spread the news of paradise found, thereby ensuring a brisk trade in new recruits.

However, some of the old-timers must have voiced a warning as the years went by. They would have pointed out that no material was available where they now lived with which to repair skin boats, at least those capable of venturing out into the ocean. Walruses in South Carolina are conspicuous by their absence. How do you fix a skin boat when you run out of skins?

The natives used dugout canoes, but these were not oceangoing vessels. The sea levels were still slowly rising. Eventually, they would cover the now useless boats that had long since rotted through lack of upkeep. The younger generation didn’t care. A hundred years after the first generation, no one was left who remembered life back in the old country. They had their own lives to live, their own families to support. Although they still used local material—shells—to build replicas of the old temple/circles they remembered, religion has to be kept alive and vibrant if it is to survive. Young people had only ritual to go on. They didn’t have the old spiritual fire in their bellies.

As the centuries slowly ticked by, an entire way of life morphed from history to religion, from religion to legend, from legend to myth, then it was forgotten. All that was left were the circles of shell, small reminders of a longforgotten religion built by a faithful few who dimly remembered stories

of the chanting and celebrations of a distant past. When the last of them died almost two thousand years later, a long-forgotten spirituality died with them.

Red Paint People of the Northeast

Five thousand years ago, when the Phoenicians dominated the Mediterranean trade routes and were perhaps beginning to venture out into the Atlantic as far west as North America, when a mysterious civilization was building house foundations in the Canadian Arctic and another was constructing shell circles along the coastline of South Carolina and Florida, another mysterious, seafaring people were thriving up north in Maine.

Since the sixteenth century, Indians had been regaling European settlers with legends of a city that was once located at the mouth of the Penobscot River. They called it Norumbega and said that it “overflowed with riches.” No one alive had ever seen it, but many looked. Their search led them to hundreds of stone structures similar to those that Europeans were familiar with in Scotland, Ireland, Norway, and Sweden. When they asked the Indians who built them, they were told, “The ancient ones.”

The search eventually led to mysterious, burial-type sites that oozed red ochre. Associated with the sites were beautifully polished stone tools that were more advanced than the ones used by local Indians. Further investigation led to the discovery of a red paint manufactured from ochre. The unknown culture who used this red paint were called the Red Paint People and were cast as the direct ancestors of the current Indian population.

A map from 1570 indicates the region of Norumbega around where New Brunswick is today. The map is not very accurate and contains some mythical places and even islands.

Investigators pressed for oral histories about this ancient civilization, but by the late 1800s the new science of archaeology was on the rise. Artifacts became the currency of choice. Myths and legends were relegated to the back seat, considered to be the made-up stories of a primitive people. The tools of the Red Paint People became a central display at an 1893 exhibition that also featured artifacts from the newly discovered Mound Building culture of the Midwest.

The early specialists at the head of the fledgling science of archaeology were quite pleased with themselves. With the discovery of both the Red Paint People and the Mound Builders, they were off to an impressive start.

Alas, things didn’t work out as smoothly as they had hoped.

Warren K. Moorehead, who worked extensively on what came to be known as the Red Paint problem, discovered that the beautiful stone used by these people, called Ramah Chert, was found in only one place on Earth. It came from Ramah Bay, hence the name. The problem was that Ramah Bay

was in Labrador, which was 1,500 miles to the north. He also discovered extensive remains of swordfish in the ochre deposits.

How did primitive Indians either travel to Labrador or establish trade routes with those who did, and how did they hunt swordfish, a deep-water species that they would have needed a boat to reach? Besides that, tools made from Ramah Chert had been found west as far as Vermont and south all the way to New Jersey. He proposed that archaeologists were dealing with a previously undiscovered, sophisticated civilization that he theorized was a maritime culture. It was his belief that they immigrated from Europe, following the same route Farley Mowat would much later describe as the path of his hypothetical Alban civilization. It led from western Europe to Iceland, then to Greenland, then to Labrador, then south to the coast of the present-day United States.

The sea levels were much lower back then. The Georges Bank at that time comprised the East Coast of North America. Strangely enough, this was the very same migration route used by immense flocks of Great Auks, whose beaks were often found in Red Paint settlement sites. Being flightless, they were so easy to kill that by 1844 they had been hunted to extinction. Between birds and plentiful seafood, obtaining food was not a problem for the ancient ones.

The evidence seemed so overwhelming to Dr. Moorehead that he proposed a new name for the Red Paint People. Because he considered them to be a distinct civilization that needed a special name, he proposed to call them the Maritime Archaic civilization.

The name implied both a unique culture that was sophisticated enough to use boats and a possible connection to European civilizations across the North Atlantic region.

He was quickly laughed off the archaeological stage and told that his ideas were preposterous. They didn’t fit in with what had already become the accepted story. He died thinking he was a complete failure.

It took eighty years, but today, the Red Paint People, now called the Maritime Archaic civilization, even has a Moorehead phase, also known as the Laurentian Tradition, named after the glacier, and the Moorehead Burial Tradition. This phase lasted from five thousand years ago, possibly even nine thousand years ago, to about 3,800 years ago, after which it mysteriously disappeared.

As far as I can determine, no archaeologist has yet officially apologized for destroying Warren Moorehead's life.

Because the Red Paint People seem to have kept pretty much to themselves, all we know about them comes from grave burials and small, settled sites. One such site was discovered on North Haven Island in Penobscot Bay. It's a six-thousand-year-old fishing village now called the Turner Farm Site, and it is the oldest surviving such site on the Atlantic coast. Its main feature is a shell midden consisting mostly of clamshells. Calcium in the shells neutralizes the acidic soil and allows for the preservation of bones and other artifacts. Mixed in with the bones are bits of pottery and fire hearths. Swordfish bones, along with moose, cod, deer, and beaver, are plentiful.

The remains of swordfish cannot be overemphasized. The Red Paint People were hunting giant swordfish at least 1,500 years before the Japanese. This practice required boats. Good ones. It is probably no accident that wood gouges and knives are the most common Red Paint tools found. These would have been used in boat construction.

A rather controversial figure in the field of archaeology, Warren Moorehead was vindicated in his beliefs that the Red Paint People were an advanced, unique fishing society that could have had connections with Europeans.

No one knows what significance red ochre held for these people. It is found in virtually every one of the graves ever discovered, so it probably had a religious meaning to them. When farmers and construction workers first began to dig into the graves back in the nineteenth century, they reported that the ground itself seemed to bleed.

What happened to this intriguing culture is a mystery. Some anthropologists insist that they assimilated into the cultures that came after them. Others put forth the idea that when the swordfish supply was depleted, the Red Paint People moved on.

The truth is that no one knows for sure. Like so many lost civilizations, they emerged from the mists of time, they grew, and they died, leaving

behind only evidence in stone and evidence in story.

The ghost of Warren Moorehead must be haunting the Maritime region, though, getting in the last word and laughing from beyond the grave. Despite the ridicule of those who thought they knew better, he had been right all along.

Bog People of Florida

In 1982, a Florida backhoe operator was hired to fill up a pond in a new housing development called Windover Estates, located south of New Smyrna Beach. In the process, Steve Vanderjagt saw what he first thought were rocks tumbling around in the bucket of his machine. Rocks are unusual in that part of Florida—sand is more the norm—so Steve took the trouble to get down and investigate. What he discovered were human skulls.

Little did he then realize how much his simple act of curiosity would throw the field of archaeology and human origins in America into a turmoil. He had discovered an 8,100-year-old cemetery.

At first, he thought he might be dealing with a recent crime scene or hunting accident, but the skulls proved to be the tip of an archaeological iceberg. To make a long but fascinating story short, three years of meticulous work, led by anthropologists from Florida State University, proved beyond doubt that this was the oldest, most well-preserved, and most shockingly informative Paleo-Indian site in North America. More ancient bodies were uncovered here than the total of all the complete bodies so far discovered in the Americas. Skeletal remains of 169 individuals were eventually uncovered. When ninety of these were examined in detail, intact, preserved brains were found.

Such a wealth of DNA material was unheard of. The ancient people who lived here had buried their dead in this pond for more than a thousand years. Due to the presence of thick, neutralizing peat deposits, the remains had existed intact for generation after generation.

This was sacred ground. The bodies were buried ritualistically, in fetal position, with their heads to the west and faces turned to the north. They had been carefully placed in the pond with a blanket spread over them, which was then staked down to keep them in place. This means that they had invented the loom and a weaving process thousands of years before anyone had

thought such a thing possible.

In many cases, they were buried with tools and artifacts that the departed would presumably need in the next world. A young girl was buried with her turtle-bone doll, perhaps a favorite toy. A young boy who suffered from spina bifida, a disease that must have rendered him immobile, had lived for up to three years before he was buried. Somebody had to have loved him very much to care for him over that long a period of time. Such burials demonstrate a highly developed sense of the spiritual conceptions of love, afterlife, community, and compassion.

This all occurred in Florida, four thousand years before anyone ever thought of building a pyramid to house the dead in Egypt!

When the DNA discovered at Windover was analyzed, a gene teased out of the skull specimens hinted at a European origin.

When the DNA discovered at Windover was analyzed, a gene teased out of the skull specimens hinted at a European origin. It appears that these Florida folks came not from Siberia but from somewhere else. Did they immigrate down from the north? Did they come to Florida from the area of what is now the Gulf of Mexico? Did they come by boat from Europe along the route possibly followed by the Solutreans?

Since then, a lot of fieldwork has been done that seems to indicate that many of these first Americans died off either because of disease or natural catastrophe. Eventually, however, some survivors, in their travels, surely met up with Siberian immigrants from the north and west. In time, they populated the continent and stayed there to await the coming of Columbus, or the Vikings before him, or the Celts before them, or the Phoenicians before them … and on it goes.

Who were these ancient people? We just don’t know. Their identity was buried with their bodies in an ancient peat bog.

Mound Builders of the Mississippi

About 6,500 years ago, people living near what is now Baton Rouge, Louisiana, felt the need to spend their days filling basketfuls of dirt, carrying them in endless procession to a central location, and emptying them onto a slowly growing, human-made mountain, eventually building a flat-topped, pyramid-shaped mound. This mind-numbing labor marked the beginning of the Mound Builder civilization.

Why did they do it? No one knows—but for the next five thousand years or so, their culture would go through three well-defined phases, now called the Adena, the Hopewell, and the Mississippian. Although most contemporary scholars assume that they were built by the indigenous people who lived there when they first made contact with Europeans, that wasn't always the case.

In 1787, for instance, Benjamin Smith Barton first put forth the theory that the mounds were built by Vikings. Since then, the Greeks, various African tribes, the Chinese, or mysterious groups of Europeans have all been suggested. Edgar Cayce predicted that we would someday learn that they were built by survivors of the Atlantis tragedy.

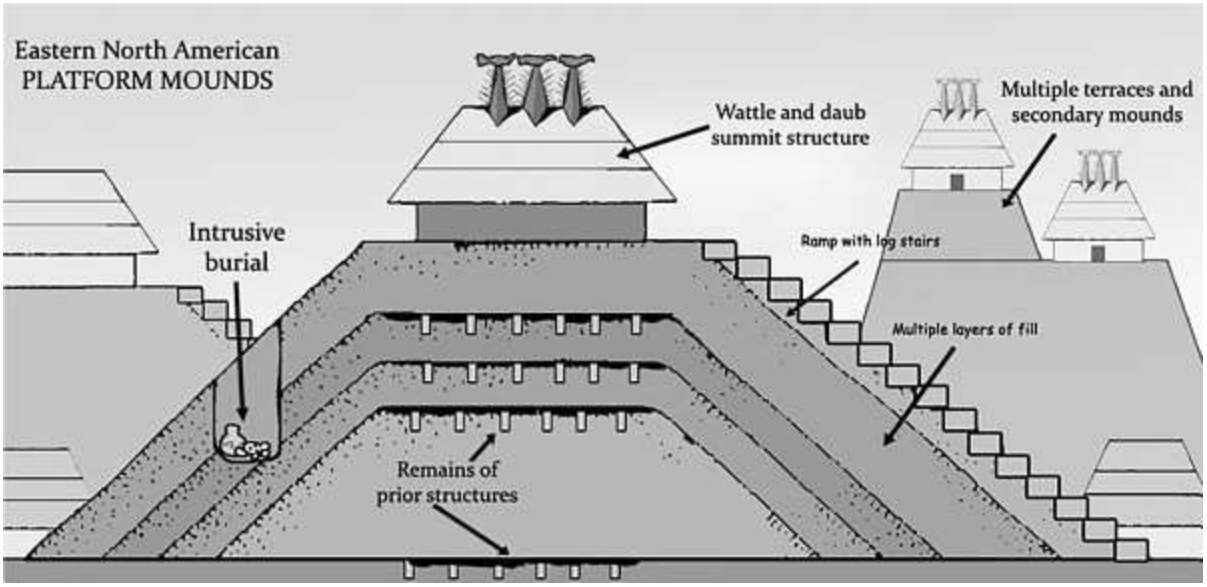
For a while, President Thomas Jefferson championed a variation of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel theory. That is the opinion held today by many members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. In The Book of Mormon, which Joseph Smith translated from golden plates he found on Hill Cumorah in Palmyra, New York, it is written that three groups of Israelites, called Nephites, Lamanites, and Mulekites, were descendants of some of the lost tribes who migrated to Mesoamerica in 590 B.C.E. following the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel. Smith never suggested that they were the Mound Builders, but it was a popular theory for a while. Some Mormon scholars still believe that the descriptions of the early Mound Builders fit with a Mesoamerican civilization that eventually moved north into the Mississippi River valley and went to work.

Hernando de Soto led the first European expedition through the southeast, starting from Florida and then up through Georgia and the Carolinas, eventually circling back to the Mississippi. During his journey, he stumbled across mounds built near what is now Augusta, Georgia. The leader of the indigenous people there was a person he thought to be, in his words, a "queen." Her name was Cofitachequi. He asked her who built the mounds. She said she didn't know, but her people were using them as burial places for

nobles.

Hundreds of the mounds were formed into animal effigy figures. The most well-known mound is undoubtedly the Serpent Mound in Ohio. Many theories attempt to explain this mound as well as others such as the Hawk and Eagle effigies in central Georgia. Although every theory has its champions, none conclusively offer any reliable proof as to authenticity. All we know for sure is that animal effigies are found from the eastern United States to as far south as Peru.

Carbon dating suggests that known Native American tribes of people built these mounds in their final form, but the tradition was six thousand years old when it was first discovered by Europeans. It started in Louisiana, but no one knows who started it, why they started it, what they were trying to accomplish, or how the mounds were used.



This diagram shows the typical structure of a large Mississippian mound with a structure at the top. Often, older mounds were built over, creating a larger and larger hill over the generations. Other mounds took the forms of animals and were not meant for habitation.

It must have taken an incredible amount of work. Suppose you want to build just a small earth mound. Let’s assume you can carry a cubic foot of dirt in your basket and that it takes you fifteen minutes to fill the basket, walk over to the mound, and dump it out. If you do this for eight hours a day, at the end of the day, you will have carried a little more than one cubic yard of dirt. Assuming you can find a way to enlist a hundred friends to help you, you can accomplish the backbreaking task of moving one hundred cubic feet of dirt in

a day—but one acre contains 40,333 cubic yards, so it will take more than a year (actually 403 days) to move enough dirt to cover one acre of ground that is three feet high. Some of these mounds cover up to twenty acres and rise to the height of a ten-story building. As the saying goes—you do the math!

The social coordination required for such a task boggles the mind—and thousands of these mounds were scattered throughout the Mississippi River valley from Louisiana to Michigan and all the way out to the Atlantic Ocean.

What moved people to drop what they were doing and go to so much trouble? What motivated them?

Then, at the height of the Mississippian period, right when the civilization was at its peak, they suddenly stopped. Everyone seems to have decided one day to quit what was then a five-thousand-year-old tradition. Why? Did the population outstrip the food supply? Did the darker aspects of the religion turn people away? Did disease rear its ugly head? Did intertribal warfare doom them to destruction?

No one knows, but where traditional archaeology stops, speculation begins, even among archaeologists. The common reasons given for the decline of the Mound Building civilization is that it may have been already in decline by the early 1500s when the first European explorers arrived on the scene, bringing death and devastation in the form of diseases for which the Indian population had absolutely no natural immunity. Estimates of death rates run as high as 90 percent of the population.

What must it have felt like? What was the physical and emotional impact this would have had on the people? It was a story very similar to that which was experienced by the inhabitants of the Amazon rainforest. A group of strange, bearded, white men show up in your village one day. They look different. They act different. They speak in a foreign language and carry tools and weapons that you have never seen before. No one warned you about these people. Until the day they arrived, you never knew such people existed.

After a few days, they leave, but then, people start getting sick and dying. As many as nine out of every ten people in every village begin to display the unmistakable signs of a sickness that is inevitably fatal. No one can work the fields anymore. No one can care for themselves. Your mind and spirit are reeling from the shock. You question your religion, which failed to warn you about this. You are fatigued from trying to help so many sick people, who can’t take care of themselves. You turn to neighboring villages

and discover that in every one of them, wherever the white strangers stopped in their journey, people are suffering the same plight. It feels as though the world has ended.

That feeling is not far from the truth. *The* world may not have ended but *your* world has. By the time the sickness has run its course, not enough people are left to continue your way of life. The fields lie barren. Food supplies run out. Eventually, all you can do is pack up your meager belongings and walk into the sunset, hoping for a better life somewhere else.

A few years go by. Then, decades pass, one by one, leaving in their wake nothing but the silence of nature reclaiming its own. After a while, more Europeans come. They see the mounds, which are now covered with forest, and draw the mistaken conclusion that no one of any substance ever lived here. They think they are the first, so they settle down and begin to reclaim what they think is virgin land, never knowing that beneath their feet lie the bones of a thriving civilization that once experienced the same passions that are common to us all.

Once in a while, the newcomers discover an artifact of some kind. They might plow over the soil that was once carried, basketful by dedicated basketful, and dumped in this specific spot to form a structure that existed to fulfill a purpose that is totally beyond the comprehension of a hardworking farmer. A forgotten spirituality lies buried beneath their feet, and life goes on until someone begins to ask questions that few care about. After all, families need to be fed. The days are too short to take time out to ponder questions about the meaning of life or a possible connection to gods foreign to a Christian religion, which is now considered to be the only path to the true God. It’s easier to call the old ones “primitive and superstitious” and leave it at that.

So it goes.

Other possibilities exist, of course. In the field of what is often referred to as “alternative” or “fringe” history, meaning a history different from the one we have been taught, ideas are endless in number. Some of the most interesting are those of Frank Joseph. When he was the editor-in-chief of *Ancient American* magazine, he devoted a lot of space to the civilization of the early American Mound Builders.

According to his theory, derived from sources that include both historians and psychic visionaries, three thousand years ago, a people known

as the Keltoi, Kelts, or Celts migrated into the British Isles. There, they learned about the existence of the Americas, which had been known to various indigenous people of western Europe for at least twenty thousand years. Groups of Kelts made the oceanic journey, arriving on the eastern shores of America at precisely the same time the mysterious Adena civilization arose. They introduced technology of various kinds, including astronomy, agriculture, iron working, road building, and European spiritual practices that had led to the megalithic need to construct monumental architecture.

Did European Kelts merge with the Adena, becoming the first Mound Builders?

A 1901 photograph of an Adena mound near Chillicothe, Ohio. The Adena culture existed in the Ohio River Valley from about 800 B.C.E. to 100 C.E.

Joseph thinks so, but his theory doesn't stop there. He believes that somewhere around 300 B.C.E., Japanese seafarers known as the Yayoi, also a Mound Building culture that had conquered and assimilated the Jōmon people of Japan, arrived on the West Coast of America. They slowly worked their way inland, leaving telltale signs of their long passage, until they met the Adena people, who were the former Kelts from Europe. Merging into one civilization, they became what we now call the Hopewell people.

Somewhere around 400 C.E., this Hopewell culture was finally decimated by attacks from Native American tribes who had the advantages of numbers and ferocity. Centuries of intertribal warfare then transpired until the last of the Hopewell civilization was destroyed in a great and final battle that took place at the falls of the Ohio River near Louisville, Kentucky.

Even that, however, didn't mark the final destiny of the Mound Builders. Joseph believes that sometime close to 900 C.E., the Maya from the Yucatán and Central America came to the conclusion that it was time for them to move north. They immigrated to west and central Illinois and eastern Missouri where, building on the Adena and Hopewell ruins found there, they eventually built the great Mississippian capital of Cahokia. Aztalan, their northern outpost in southern Wisconsin, was built in about 1240 C.E.

Eventually, what Joseph now calls the neo-Mayans, having spread out to cover much of the Midwest and the whole southeastern seaboard, were forced to move, following the dictates of their sacred, prophetic calendar. They evacuated the Mississippi River valley and migrated south toward the Valley of Mexico.

One of the newest and most intriguing theories about the Mound Builders was put forth by Graham Hancock in his 2019 book, *America Before*. He believes that the genesis of the Mound Builders can be found in an ancient parent civilization that was capable of exploring and even mapping the entire planet. The Mississippi region might even have been its home base from which it spread out not only to the Americas but to Egypt and Anatolia as well. When it was destroyed at the time of the Younger Dryas comet catastrophe that devastated much of North America, it spawned the various Atlantis tradition stories. His book goes into much more detail, of course, and is well worth the read!

Some of these conclusions mesh very nicely with those of Edgar Cayce, the famous "sleeping prophet." Archaeologists may disagree, but without definite evidence, we are forced to admit that often a lot more emotion and opinion is generated by both sides than actual fact-based conclusions.

We *know* the mounds are there. We *think* they demonstrate the need for social and political authority and structure. We *assume* religious motivation was the deciding organizational factor. We *guess* disease entered into the final demise of the culture.

However, all we are definitely left with is another mysterious lost

civilization.

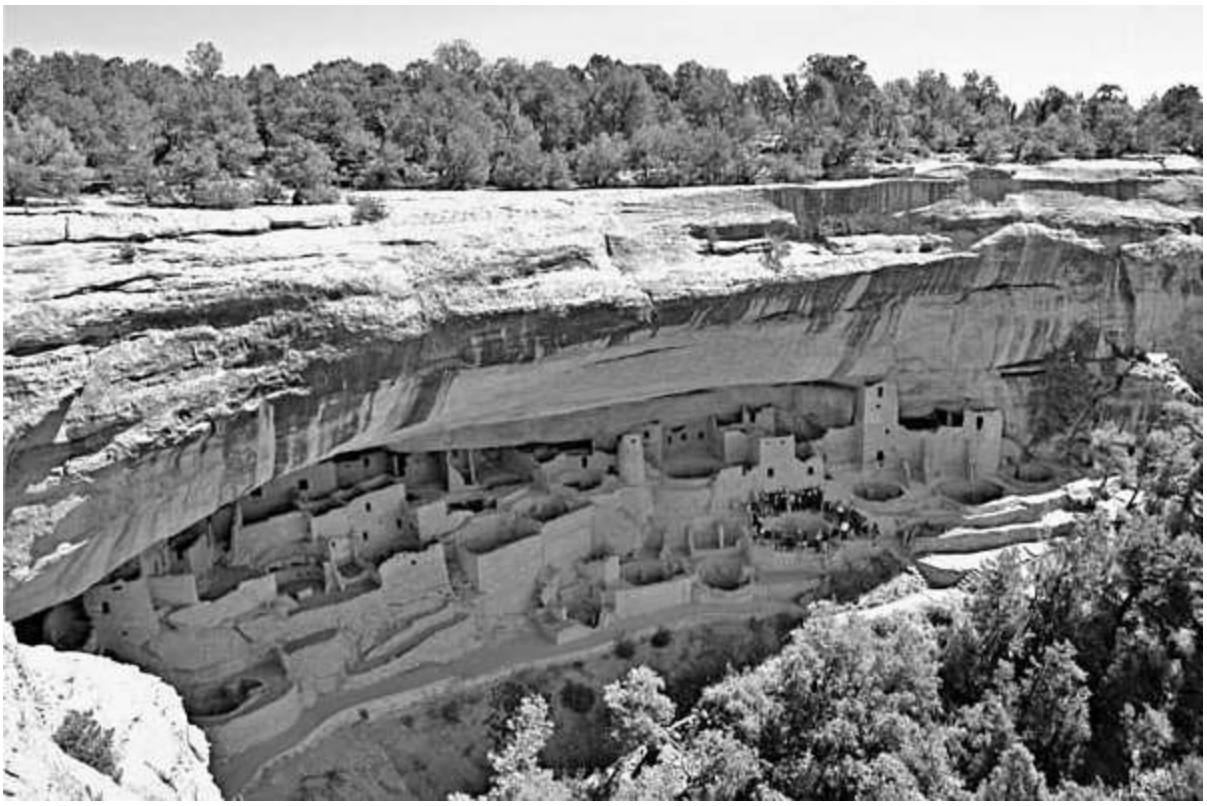
ANASAZI OF THE AMERICAN SOUTHWEST

Back in Part I, we used the Anasazi as an example of how climate change can lead to the demise of a civilization. That's still the theory accepted by most of official academia, but in the last few years, it has been called into question not because of facts but because of political correctness. In this book, we are looking at the past through two different sets of criteria: evidence in stone and evidence in story. Now we come to a crossroads. What do we do when fact contradicts legend?

It's a real problem. Facts have often been proved wrong. We are used to accepting a supposed fact-based version of history, only to learn that the facts were, at best, incomplete. When that happens, traditional voices are ready and waiting to declare that we are guilty of "revisionist" history.

Legends and mythology can't be ignored, but stories, too, change with time. They get inflated and edited with the telling as time goes on. We are tempted to clean up the acts of our ancestors to make them more heroic and appealing than they were in the flesh.

In the case of the Anasazi, or Ancestral Puebloans as they are now called, we find ourselves in just such a bind. Fact meets legend. Which do we believe?



The Cliff Palace at Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado is a superb example of Anasazi architecture. The Anasazi were the ancestors of today's Pueblo Indians.

To make sense of this, we have to go back to 1969. Christy Turner, a forensic specialist turned physical anthropologist, presented a paper in which he claimed to have found evidence of cannibalism at a critical time in Anasazi history.

Modern Puebloans, who consider themselves descendants of the Anasazi, were understandably upset. Cannibalism is a terrible thing to think about. They complained about Turner's conclusions, accusing him of denigrating their ancestors in the same way Indians have been negatively portrayed down through the last two centuries.

They have a good point. You only have to look at old Western movies, or consider the cartoonish characterizations depicting Indian mascots for athletic teams, to recognize the truth of what they are saying.

But Turner and his wife, Catherine, stuck to their guns. They said they were not denigrating anyone; they were simply presenting the facts.

However, this was the tumultuous seventies, when the baby-boom generation was discovering anew the richness of Indian heritage and

complaining, again with good reason, that to suggest such a thing as cannibalism was akin to condemning a whole race.

Turner reordered his protocol and, submitting his findings to strict scientific standards, insisted that six criteria had to be met. Even Bruce Bradley, cofounder of the Solutrean hypothesis and an expert when it came to the flint knapping techniques used in the Southwest, was forced to admit that the evidence he found suggested that some Anasazi might have practiced cannibalism some of the time.

Turner was ostracized and branded an outcast from the scientific community because Hopi and Zuni elders insisted that no oral history of such an abomination being practiced by their ancestors even existed. A few dark stories came up about something terrible that happened in the old days at Chaco Canyon, but that was all. No legends mentioned cannibalism.

Until his death in 2013, Turner continued to present his findings. He had evidence of scattered, mutilated bodies showing cut marks on bones that were identical to those found on the butchered remains of animal carcasses. He found evidence of human remains that had been in contact with the same Anasazi pottery in which they had been cooked.

Still, the academic community refused to go along with him, preferring to quote the legends of the Hopi and Zuni elders, who swore that their ancestors were a peaceful folk who personified the “make peace, not war” slogans so popular in the seventies. The Anasazi were an example of the best sort of human behavior. They lived in peace and only sought to be left alone to grow their crops and live their lives in harmony with their environment. At the zenith of their power, they covered an area bigger than Ireland and had a trade network that reached from Mexico to beyond the Mississippi featuring straight roads connecting centers of their far-flung empire. These roads were thirty feet wide and marveled of engineering that even sported rest stops for the weary traveler.

Academics insisted that whatever evidence Turner had collected had been misinterpreted. The bones may have been cut apart, the soft tissue removed and maybe even boiled, but this was probably done out of respect and veneration for the dearly departed. If such a heinous thing as cannibalism had once been practiced, surely some mention of it would have remained in the oral record.

Then came the crushing blow, though. While studying a coprolite, a

piece of dried, human feces, unquestionable evidence turned up that at least one human had eaten at least one other human at least one time.

Turner had since died, but his work was justified. Now that scientists had been shown what to look for and how to go about testing it, it turned out that cannibalism was much more prevalent in the human story than had previously ever been suspected. Evidence turned up from Spain and Africa. Twelve-thousand-year-old examples from Europe were brought to light. A dark secret from our past had been exposed. Now what could we do about it?

Cannibalism, at least according to this theory, was the weapon of terror that turned the Anasazi into a peaceful, conquered people.

Experts who were now willing to at least face the facts, even if reluctantly, had to decide why this practice came to be. What could possibly make one human eat another?

Anthropologists turned again to the Anasazi problem. What caused the practice of cannibalism in the American Southwest?

War was eliminated right away. The two-hundred-year window that featured cannibalism turned out to be a rather peaceful time in Anasazi history. Hunger and starvation were eliminated for the same reason. Game was plentiful.

What was left? As always, thoughts turned to religion. Unmistakable signs of Mexican influence were discovered during this critical time of Anasazi history. A ball court reminiscent of Mesoamerica. Perfect examples of Mexican art and pottery. Could a connection exist between the fierce Maya–Toltec culture and the peaceful Anasazi?

Gradually, a theory emerged. Cannibalism, at least according to this theory, was the weapon of terror that turned the Anasazi into a peaceful, conquered people. Possibly, it came from entrenched religious leaders, but more probable is the idea that invaders from the south, wanting to expand their trading networks, moved into Anasazi territory and brought with them a fierce religion that featured human sacrifice. What better way to terrorize a

peaceful people than to move into the very center of the civilization, Chaco Canyon, and make it a ritual place of slaughter and sacrifice designed to keep the locals in line?

Was this why cliff dwellings began to appear in remote corners of canyon country? Was this the basis of “certain dark stories about something terrible that happened in the old days at Chaco Canyon”? Was this secret so terrible that the survivors wouldn’t even speak of it, thus causing the absence of even a rumor of cannibalism in the oral memories of the people?

Let’s go one step further. Where did the concept of Christian communion come from? Every Christian has heard the words, “This is my body. Eat it in remembrance of me. This is my blood. Drink it in remembrance of me.” These words were supposedly uttered by the one called the Prince of Peace. Why, in heaven’s name, would they show up in a religious context such as a Christian mass unless they were known to be catchphrases of an ancient but unspeakable practice that must have been familiar to early writers around the world? The phrases were so well known that before Christianity became the religion of the state, early Christians were accused of cannibalism and thrown to the lions. Was Christianity guilty of practicing in metaphor what the Mesoamerican religions practiced in reality?

The arguments continue to this day. If the Anasazi were a peaceful people, why did they choose to live in such remote and dangerous places, where a single slip on a rocky path could mean instant death? They must have been very afraid of something.

No evidence exists of nomadic invaders who entered the region in numbers sufficient enough to drive out thousands of well-entrenched natives.

It couldn’t have been caused only by severe drought. The Anasazi had weathered drought conditions before. Why was this time so different? Besides, they would have seen it coming. They were intelligent people who, unlike us, were very much in tune with their environment. Certainly, they would not have simply exploited their resources to the point of death.

Why was their end so sudden and so complete? What secrets are history keeping from us? What don’t we know?

Perhaps no evidence, in and of itself, is sufficient to explain the lost civilization of the Anasazi. Maybe a combination of all the arguments is closer to the truth. History is complicated. It is a multifaceted gem that does

not reveal all of itself in a single surface. Do we believe the oral tradition, or do we deal with simple facts as they present themselves? Maybe the answer is found in following both approaches.

Maybe the answers will never be found.

THE PACIFIC

EASTER ISLAND

Human beings are capable of great things. We can also be incredibly nasty to each other and downright stupid sometimes. The story of Easter Island is one that illustrates the extremes of the human condition. It is a story of bravery, adventure, resourcefulness, beauty, hope, and possibility. It also features brutality, shortsightedness, stupidity, greed, and power. We can throw in a healthy dose of mystery as well.

If we want to view a microcosm of what is going on in the world right now, we have only to look at Easter Island. If we want to know what might happen to us as a species, this is the place to begin. If we want to look clearly into a mirror, we have only to read about what happened on this small isle of beauty, new beginnings, tragedy, unspeakable brutality, and recovery.

Three volcanoes erupted deep beneath the placid waters of the Pacific Ocean 750,000 years ago about 2,300 miles (3,700 kilometers) west of Chile

in South America. After millennia of spreading lava, steaming and cooling, building up and breaking down, far beneath the waves and thus out of sight of any human eye, the lava flows reached the surface and slowly formed what would one day be a paradise called Rapa Nui.

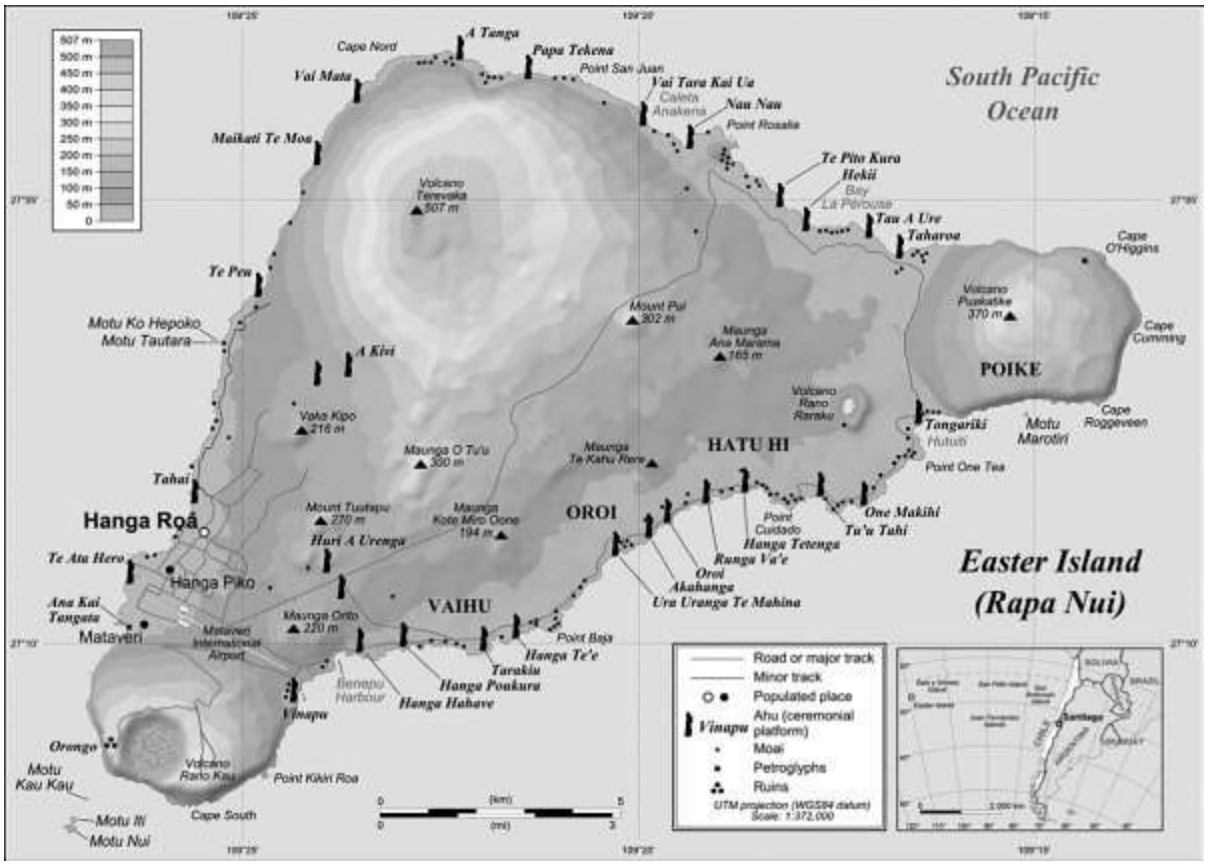
Although it is disputed by some, the traditional story goes that somewhere between 300 and 700 C.E., it was discovered by intrepid Polynesians, who paddled the seas in large, double-hulled canoes, navigating by the stars and ocean currents like no natural navigators before or since. They had spread out from New Zealand in the south all the way to Hawaii in the north, populating small islands along the way. Rapa Nui would become their most easterly outpost.

They came equipped to settle in, bringing with them staples such as paper mulberry trees, chickens, sugar cane, and taro. They also brought, probably without meaning to, rats.

They found an island covered with an estimated sixteen million trees and all the natural resources needed to farm and live an abundant life. Here, they began a complex civilization, connected to what they had known but, because of their isolation, transformed into a new thing. For a while, it must have been an ideal existence, but it was not to last.

An unknown nineteenth-century Tahitian is given the credit for coining the name Rapa Nui. The shape of the island is said to have reminded him of Rapa, a small Tahitian island, but it was *nui*, which means “bigger.” Although no rivers or lakes were on the island, the now extinct volcano cores had filled with rainwater. They supplied plenty of fresh drinking water if the people were careful about preserving and protecting it.

Two distinct groups of people inhabited Rapa Nui, and their identity is still cause for intense debate. One group was called, long after they ceased to exist, of course, the Short Ears. The other was called the Long Ears. By artificially manipulating the length of their ears, the two communities probably meant to purposefully keep themselves separate from one another.



A map of Rapa Nui (Easter Island) shows how the famous monolithic heads are positioned all around the island's circumference and also near the top of Terevaka volcano.

Thor Heyerdahl, in his 1957 book, *Aku Aku: The Secret of Easter Island*, theorized that the Long Ears were immigrants from Peru, who had arrived from the east on rafts similar to his famous *Kon-Tiki*. He compiled quite a list of compelling evidence involving everything from ocean currents to imported foodstuff such as sweet potatoes, which were then found only in South America. He listened intently to Peruvian legends about Viracocha, the legendary bringer of civilization before the time of the Inca. We quoted one of them earlier:

> Before he appeared, they said, the land was full of chaos. But when he left them to travel across the Pacific—some say he walked on the water, others say he used rafts—he left order and a better life behind. His name, they said, was Viracocha, the "Foam of the Sea." In other versions of the tale, especially the one made famous by Thor Heyerdahl, he was called Kon Tiki.

The Short Ears, then, were presumably Polynesians, who came by outrigger canoes from the West.

Who came first? What happened when they met? How did they survive side by side for so long?

These were the questions that consumed Polynesian scholars during the 1960s and 1970s. Then, with the advent of the science of DNA research, Heyerdahl's theories seemed to be swept under the rug, and any thought of early Peruvian contact was summarily dismissed. The DNA studied on Easter Island seemed to indicate only Polynesian ancestry.

It seems to be the case these days that as far as academics are concerned, DNA evidence trumps everything. In the court of academia, all of Heyerdahl's evidence no longer amounted to much.

However, time will tell. As accurate as the science of DNA research seems to be, we shall soon see many reasons why Peruvian bloodlines have disappeared from the Easter Island story. DNA is an important tool in the anthropological tool kit, but it is only one tool among many. It's important to remember that.

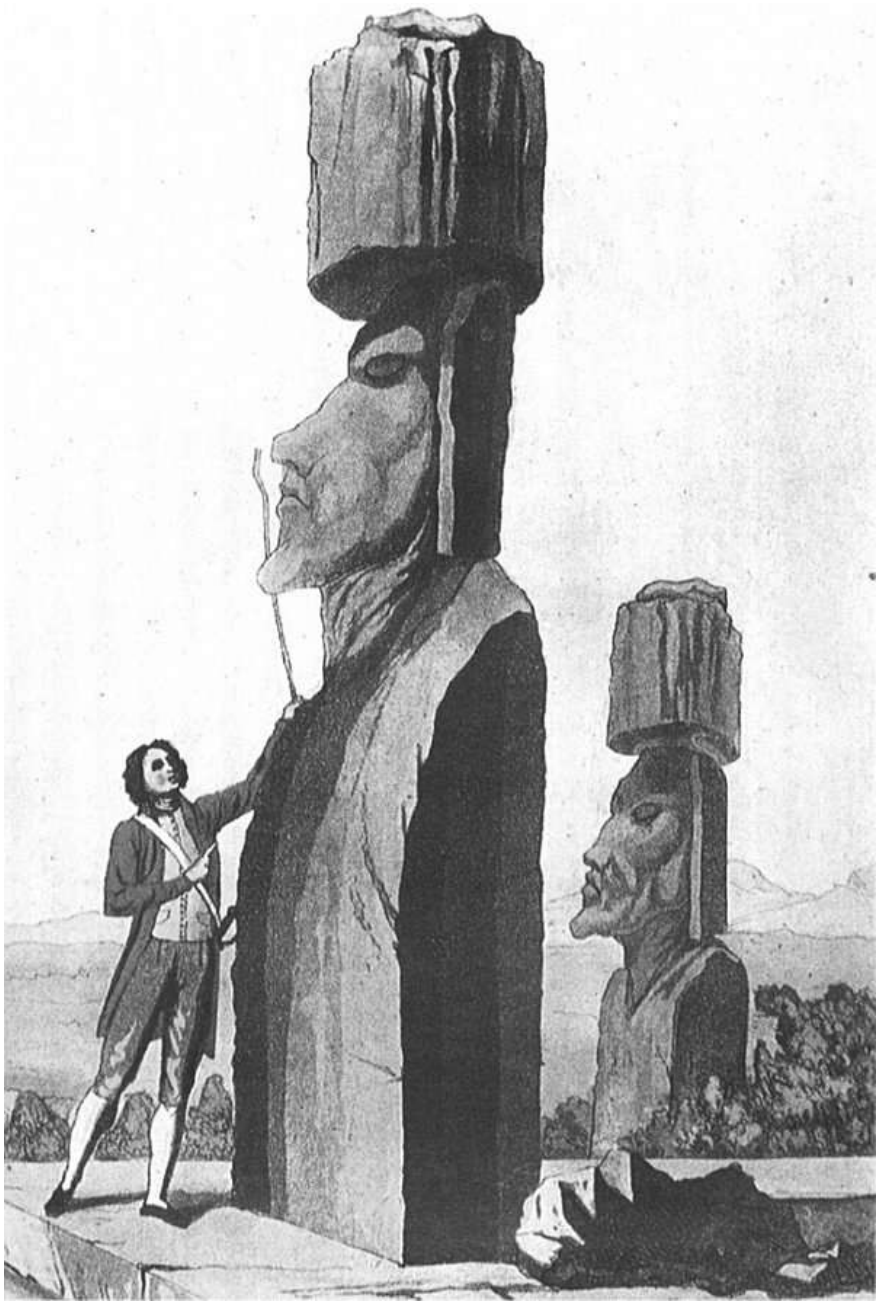
Whatever the social conditions of Rapa Nui, the governmental structure, as is the case in both Polynesia and Peru, seems to be that of a caste system with a great chief, an "Ariki Mau," in charge by virtue of divine descent. Outlying districts were governed by less powerful Arikis who, at least before the final collapse of the culture, were selected to serve for one year on the basis of a dangerous competition carried out by a bird cult. More about that in a minute.

In 1722, the Dutch explorer Jacob Roggeveen happened upon the island. It was the first European contact for the Rapa Nui people, who by this time were convinced that they were the only people in the world. Because it was Easter Sunday, Roggeveen, in a typical display of European arrogance, decided to call "his" island Easter Island. The fact that others lived there first didn't seem to have entered his head. As far as he was concerned, he had discovered the place.

He celebrated his discovery with another typical European act. When a Rapa Nui native, no doubt completely in awe of strangers who were totally different from anything he could have previously imagined, snatched a hat off the head of one of the strangers, the strangers immediately opened fire, killing some of the natives. Roggeveen set sail a short time later.

In his log, he described a thriving civilization and monumental Moai, or

enigmatic standing stone statues, that were a complete mystery. They stood on stone pedestals, overlooking the villages that stretched to the horizon. Who built them? How did they build them? Why were they built? They have since become the iconic visual image of Easter Island.



An eighteenth-century engraving shows Jacob Roggeveen admiring one of the statues on Easter Island.

Some of the natives, he said, wore plates in their ears, stretching them all the way down to their shoulders. They had a variety of skin colors but

were not black people. They decorated themselves with tattoos, feathers, and shells. They didn't want or need any food, but they were fascinated by hats.

That was the end of European contact with Easter Island for fifty-two years, but now, it was on the map, so it was only a matter of time. In 1774, Captain James Cook stopped in for a visit. He described quite a different civilization. Something had happened in the intervening half century, but what? A population that once numbered twelve thousand had shrunk drastically. Only about seven hundred people were left. Many of the Moai, some of which were thirty feet (nine meters) tall, had been deliberately toppled over. The magnificent outrigger canoes were now reduced to patched-up driftwood. The signs of civil unrest were everywhere. What had happened?

The answer to that question comprises the essential Easter Island mystery that is so important for us to ponder today because what happened to them on a small Pacific Island is happening to us on a global scale.

Experts tend to explain the Easter Island story in two different ways. Both explanations have their advocates. Unfortunately, neither has a happy ending. Let's take them one at a time.

Jared Diamond's book *Collapse* summarizes what might be called the Misguided Ecological Collapse theory. In his words, Easter Island represents the "clearest example of a society that destroyed itself by overexploiting its own resources." As he sees it, Easter Islanders overharvested what they thought was an inexhaustible supply of trees. As so many civilizations before them, they practiced slash-and-burn agricultural methods. They burned the forests to create fields. With the abundance of agricultural crops, the population grew. Pretty soon, they had more people and fewer trees, but after a while, they had too many people and no trees.

Besides the obvious ecological problems inherent in no longer having a supply of firewood, they had inadvertently marooned themselves in the Pacific. How do you repair, let along build, oceangoing vessels if you want or need to leave home? You've destroyed your supply of lumber. Jared calls this self-destructive practice "ecocide." He warns that this is the path upon which we are moving today. If we don't change the ways we exploit our natural resources, we'll all go down together. Planet Earth may seem like a big island, but it, too, is floating in an immense ocean of space, and no way exists to simply leave when the collapse comes.

Now we come to the second theory of what happened at Easter Island.

Terry Hunt and Carl Lipo from the University of Hawaii have quite a different take on the story. In their 2011 book *The Statues That Walked*, they make the case that "rather than a case of abject failure," what happened to the people on Easter Island "is an unlikely story of success."

They look at Easter Island and find no evidence of slash-and-burn agriculture. They say that to blame the early island people for the demise of the trees is just wrong. The trees did die, for sure, but it wasn't from large-scale, misguided farming practices. Another culprit is to blame.

Earlier, when we listed the cargo of the first settlers, we said, "They also brought, probably without meaning to, rats." If a single mating pair of Polynesian rats, a species called *Rattus exulans*, stowed away on the first canoe to touch shore, they would have encountered an environment that was free from their natural predators and offered a seemingly unlimited supply of their native foods: palm roots and tree sprouts. Studies done in Hawaii indicate that such a population could double exponentially every forty-seven days. If that happened, Easter Island could very quickly have been host to a population of two million to three million rats. It wouldn't have taken long to completely clean off every new sprout and then every existing tree on the island. The people couldn't even have been able to plant new seedlings.

One theory about how Easter Island became denuded of trees was that an infestation of Polynesian rats accidentally brought there by the islanders ate all the tree seedlings, destroying the future of the forests.

The upside, though, was this. (If you've got a tender stomach, you'd better skip this part.) What did the people eat when their supply of crops and natural food such as birds and plants died? Archaeologists, when studying ancient garbage heaps on Easter Island, discovered that 60 percent of the bones they unearthed were rat bones. It seems as though the people managed to find a new source of protein. What's worse, when scientists studied the various rock gardens left on the island, they deduced that it had contained sufficient food to "sustain a population density similar to today's Oklahoma, Colorado, Sweden, and New Zealand." This, coupled with the fact that hungry people usually don't spend time carving and transporting thirty-foot statues that can weigh up to seventy tons, seems to argue against starvation.

Therefore, Hunt and Lipo call Easter Island a "success story." When faced with a destroyed ecosystem through no fault of their own, they found a way to get by even though they were marooned on an island in the middle of the Pacific.

This view has its detractors. If they had enough food, why did their population decline so rapidly?

Hunt and Lipo theorize the old problem of European disease that accompanies every first contact between native populations and European explorers. The disaster was compounded when whalers started to stop by the island in the early nineteenth century. They were looking for water, fresh vegetables, and women. They left behind epidemics of venereal disease. Is it any wonder that the natives grew to fear outside contact?

If these two competing theories about the demise of the Easter Island civilization comprised the whole story, it would be interesting enough, but more is to come—a lot more.

The Easter Island story encompasses a mysterious civil war. It delves into a labyrinth of underground caves where people were hiding out from something or someone unknown. It even involves cannibalism. At one dark point in its history, Easter Island fell victim to slave traders. In 1808, an American ship named the *Nancy* arrived. After a bloody battle, the sailors captured twelve men and ten women before setting sail to the Juan Fernandez Islands, where their captives were to be sold as slaves. Three days out, the captain allowed his captives on deck. They immediately jumped overboard and began hopelessly swimming for home. When attempts to apprehend them failed, the ship just sailed away, leaving them all to drown.

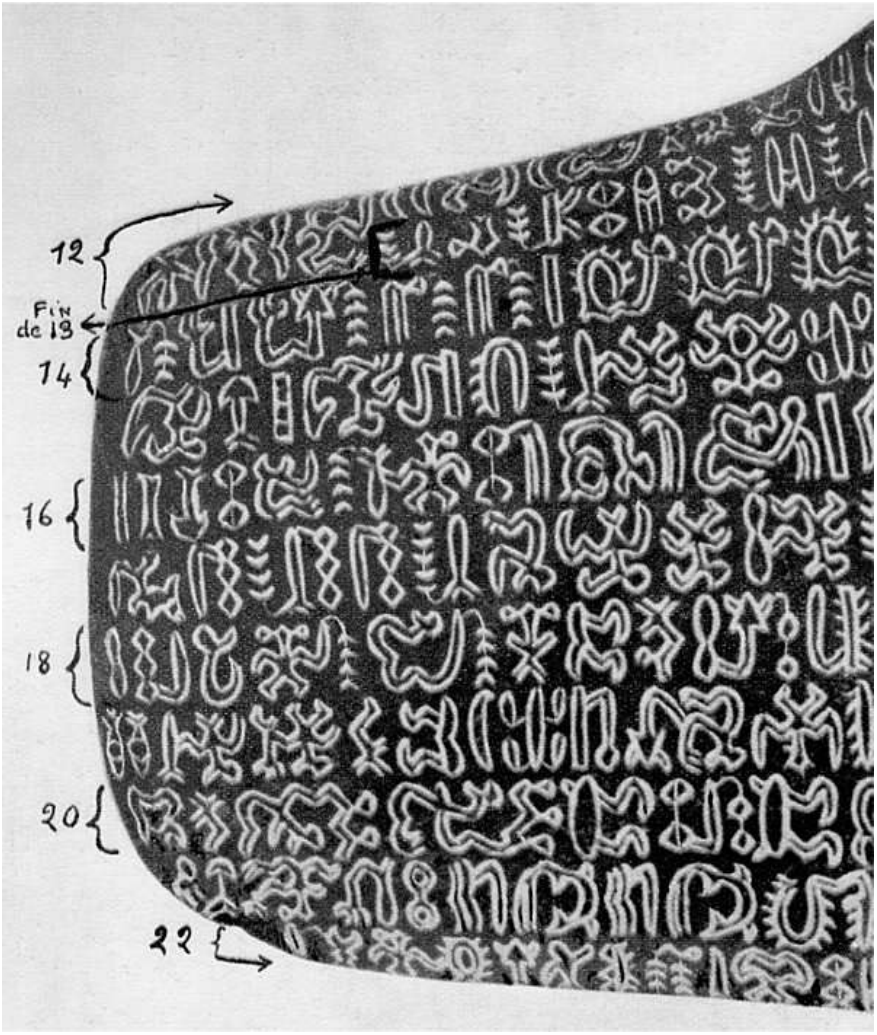
However, word must have gotten around that Easter Island was a good hunting ground for the slave trade because by the 1860s, Peruvian slavers had made it their primary source of captives. In December 1862, eight Peruvian ships arrived offshore. Between bribery and outright violence, they made off with one thousand Easter Islanders, including the king, his son, and the ritual priest. These were the very individuals who knew the old stories and were vested with the task of keeping traditions alive. With this kind of persecution, is it any wonder that so many gaps exist not only in our knowledge but in that of the indigenous people as well? Over the years, it is estimated that more than two thousand people were captured and forced into the Peruvian slave market, where 90 percent would die due to overwork and disease within the first two years of their captivity.

The local bishop of Tahiti was finally able to apply sufficient pressure on the Peruvian government so that worldwide public outcry eventually brought an end to the slave trade. A few former slaves were loaded up and shipped from Peru back to Easter Island, but they had contracted smallpox. When fifteen survivors made it home, the resulting epidemic spread

throughout the remaining islanders. It nearly wiped out the entire population.

All this public attention brought the story of Easter Island into the public domain. As a result, well-meaning Catholic missionaries arrived and tried, very successfully, to convert the islanders to Christianity. They were brought to the island in a ship captained by Jean-Baptiste Onésime Dutrou-Bornier. After Captain Dutrou-Bornier dropped off his cargo of missionaries, he looked around and decided that Easter Island would make a good sheep ranch. He soon traded for some land and, through the judicious use of gun and fire, made himself the powerful overlord of the whole island. When the missionaries objected to his tactics, he drove them off the island. By 1877, the entire native population of Easter Island consisted of 110 very discouraged natives, most of whom were employed by Dutrou-Bornier, who by this time had declared himself king. Eventually, no doubt fed up with the whole outside world, the islanders rose up and murdered him.

Somehow, in the midst of all this tragedy and brutality, Easter Island still clung to beauty and genius. Alone among all the islands of Polynesia, it created its own written language. It’s called Rongorongo, but no one left alive today can read it. Oral tradition says that it was first written on banana leaves with shark teeth. No early examples of this material survive, of course, but wood sticks and plaques were used as well, and many of them can now be found hanging in honored places on the walls of native homes.



The Easter Islanders created a unique writing form of glyphs. The glyphs are considered a type of protowriting, and it is likely only the elite on the island could read them.

Rongorongo means “to recite, to declaim, or to chant out.” It probably denotes genealogies and calendar tables, but it marks one of the very few independent inventions of writing in all of human history.

The Moai alone would make Easter Island one of the most mysterious places on the planet. No one, despite all the theories bandied about, knows for sure what they mean. Most people assume that they are mounted on pedestals looking out to sea, but actually, without exception, they face inland toward local communities. They are a mystery wrapped in an enigma and surrounded with puzzling, contradicting details.

Archaeologists have located the single quarry where they were all made. Tools were found all over the ground. They were carved by elite craftsmen and then transported to the site where they were erected.

How, though? The locals cite legends that say they “walked” to their final resting places. Some believe them to have been dragged on rollers. Others swear they were moved by water. The verdict is still out on that one.

Why were they carved in the first place? Why do they sport red topknots? Did the folks who first inspired them have red hair? If so, where did they come from? Red hair is not a trait displayed anywhere in Polynesia. Why were so many of them overturned, smashed, and mutilated in the fifty-year period between the first and second European contacts?

That leads to an even greater mystery. Robert Schoch is a respected, scholarly professional from Boston University. He is most well known for his work at the Sphinx of Giza. Although he is conservative in his approach to problems of geology and is usually found on the side of traditional research unless the facts suggest otherwise, at Giza he discovered evidence of water erosion that meant that the traditional construction dates for the Sphinx were way off. The only time such erosion could have possibly occurred was at least ten thousand years ago. That predates the usual dates by more than five thousand years. His discovery caused no end of concern among traditional Egyptologists.

When he studied the Moai of Easter Island, he did it again. He brought up two independent problems most traditionalists simply wanted to ignore. One concerned the writing system of Easter Island. The other dealt with the famous Moai. For that, and that only, he is found guilty of harboring a “wacky theory.”

Estelle Thurtle at the *Listverse* website puts it very succinctly:

> In what has been labeled a “wacky theory,” Robert M. Schoch claimed in 2012 that the writing system of Easter Island is actually 10,000 years older than popularly believed. This also makes the island [civilization] itself older than originally thought.

Traditional scholarship states that the first of Easter Island’s statues was erected somewhere around 690 C.E., which is about four hundred years after the first humans arrived in 300 C.E. The last Moai was built about a thousand years later. That would put the end of construction at about 1650 C.E. These dates are based primarily on carbon dating. So far, we’re on safe, traditional ground.

Recently, though, archaeologists discovered that the great statutes are

much bigger than were first thought. Most people assumed that the great heads were erected on the ground, but in some cases, the heads are sitting on bodies that are buried thirty feet below the surface. They're like icebergs; just the tip is visible, with the great mass lying below the ground.

Here's the central problem. How long does it take thirty feet of sediment to build up? Three or four hundred years is not nearly long enough. In order to reach that kind of depth, the statues have to be thousands, not hundreds, of years old.

When originally discovered, many of the Maoi statues just looked like heads resting on the ground, but then it was learned that the heads are on top of bodies buried in up to thirty feet of sediment. This would indicate they are far older than originally thought.

This caused Schoch to research other evidence. Earlier, we said that Easter Islanders invented their own alphabet and their own written language. How could they have done all that and then promptly forgotten how to read it all in a few hundred years?

That sounds suspicious and leads to more questions. Although most experts don't like to bring it up, not all the statues are fashioned from volcanic material. Some are carved out of basalt, which is not found on the

island. Basalt is located under the ocean nearby in rather deep water, but the basalt formations haven't been exposed on dry land since the last Ice Age, thousands of years ago, when ocean levels were drastically lower than today.

Does that mean that Easter Island is an exposed top of what once was a much larger landmass during a period of time at least twelve thousand years ago? If so, it raises the possibility that ancient people were living there who built the first of the great Moai, a tradition that was kept up until 1650 C.E., when the original people were long forgotten except in the myths that traditional archaeologists refuse to believe contain history of any significant relevance.

No wonder the whole subject creates such debate. It sounds suspiciously like Schoch is resurrecting discredited stories concerning the lost continent of Mu, which was supposed to have existed in this area, so most traditionalists find it far easier to lump his ideas into the "wacky theory" category.

Yet one more Easter Island mystery is to be considered. Since its discovery, it has almost succeeded in pushing the Moai mystery into second place in terms of tourist attractions.

After the collapse of the Moai tradition, it seems some new gods replaced the old ones. It could be that civil war violence needed to be replaced with something new. The result was a sporting event held by what has come to be known as the Birdman Cult.

Who was going to rule the island? Who was going to be in charge? The people were sick of war, so they invented a bloodless competition to see who was going to be king for a year. Each candidate had a champion. That champion, joined by the other contestants, would dive off the cliffs of Orongo, swim to the island of Moto Nui, gather up the first sooty tern (*manutara*) egg of the year, and bring it back to his sponsor, who would then serve a term as king of Rapa Nui for the next year.

The king was required to shave his head and grow his fingernails long so that he would resemble the manutara vulture. The egg was, of course, a sign of fertility. It was kind of like a Rapa Nui Easter egg hunt but more dangerous. More than half the competitors died from shark attacks, falls, drowning, and the very nature of the competition itself, but at least they had volunteered for the job.

The whole competition was abolished in 1860, when Christianity

became the official religion of Rapa Nui. Maybe the Easter egg metaphor wasn't too far off base.

We began this section by observing that Easter Island offers a glimpse into our own future. It's a small island, not much bigger than Manhattan, placed in a vast ocean, but its mysterious past raises all sorts of similarities to the plight of planet Earth. Earth is a lot bigger, of course, than Easter Island, but once we get past the problem of scale, eerie parallels exist.

- Vast, forgotten, lost periods of history exist in the Easter Island story. The people who could fill in the details are long gone.
- The island itself, and the people who first lived there, might be a lot older than traditional archaeologists let on.
- A possibility exists that the people brought about their own demise through shortsighted ecological practices, eventually destroying the very resources that could sustain their lives.
- A possibility also exists that, through no fault of their own, they needed to adapt to a changing physical environment.
- Violence keeps rising to the surface, even in paradise. The people had no way to leave their prison/paradise. They needed to adapt or die.
- When faced with difficulties, the people turned to religion.

We could go on. Draw your own conclusions, but the demise of the mysterious Easter Island civilization causes us all to pause for a minute and consider our own plight. The natives undoubtedly thought the era in which they lived was normal—that things had always been the same and would never change.

They were wrong. Are we any different?

ANTARCTICA

STRUCTURES BENEATH THE ICE

Charles Hapgood earned a master's degree from Harvard University. He served on what would eventually become the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and was a liaison officer between the White House and the secretary of war. He wrote a book about Earth crustal displacement that featured a foreword written by Albert Einstein but possessed an open, inquiring mind that was suspect to mainstream academia. Even his Wikipedia biography says his ideas "were never accepted as valid competing scientific hypotheses, yet [they] have found popularity in alternative circles."

While a professor at Springfield College, one of his students asked a question concerning the lost continent of Mu. He welcomed such inquiries and used the question as a springboard to talk about the Atlantis theory. When the class responded favorably, he decided to investigate the possibilities of a historical catastrophe that might have occurred within the

span of human life on the planet.

By 1958, he had learned enough to write a book called *The Earth's Shifting Crust.* That was the book that eventually caught the attention of Albert Einstein. In it, Hapgood questioned the theory of continental drift and instead proposed that at various times in the past, the entire surface of Earth had shifted "just as the peel of an orange might shift around the orange itself."

One of his arguments concerned the existence of ancient maps that show a world quite different from the one we know today. In 1966, he wrote *Maps of the Ancient Sea Kings: Evidence of Advanced Civilization in the Ice Age*, which he followed in 1968 with *The Path of the Pole*. The crux of Hapgood's argument is based on a series of maps that, at the very least, raise some interesting questions. One of them is called the Piri Reis map.

A bust of geographer, cartographer, navigator, and admiral Piri Reis (Ahmed Muhiddin Piri) is at the Istanbul Naval Museum. His world map includes astounding facts, such as the existence of Antarctica, which was not discovered until 1840.

Piri Reis was a Turkish admiral who lived between 1470 and 1554. Born in Gallipoli, which was a naval base of the Marmara Sea, he was a son of the pirate Kemal Reis, who somehow had reinvented himself as an admiral. In those days, such things were a lot easier than today. The two sailed together between 1487 and 1493. This was when Piri learned the art of naval warfare.

Kemal was killed in 1502. Piri gave up pirating and began a second

career as a mapmaker. He was a stickler for detail, and in 1513 he created his famous map based on a chart captured from Christopher Columbus. It was standard practice in those days to throw charts overboard if your ship was captured and boarded. Columbus, or one of his captains, wasn't quite quick enough when he was boarded by the Turkish navy, and Reis later obtained a crucial map at the Imperial Library at Constantinople, which was one of the great learning centers of his age.

On February 27, 1932, an issue of the *Illustrated London News* featured an article entitled "A Columbus Controversy: America—And Two Atlantic Charts." The article reveals that "Columbus got little further than the mouth of the Orinoco, in Venezuela, in his voyage along the coast of South America in 1498, so that the stretches of the South American coast given in the Piri Reis chart must have been copied from other sources."

In August 1956, Captain Arlington Mallery decided to look into the Piri Reis map to determine what its source might have been. His friend M. I. Walters initially drew his attention to something so revolutionary that at first, he didn't want to share it with the public, but as he later explained on a radio show sponsored by Georgetown University in which both he and Walters were interviewed in 1954 at the Library of Congress, Walters had handed him:

> … a copy of a map drawn by a Turkish naval officer.… After making an analysis of it, I took it back to him and requested that the Officer check both the latitude and longitude and the projection. When they asked why, I said, "There is something in this map that no one is going to believe coming from me, and I don't know whether they will believe it coming from you." That was the fact that Columbus had with him a map that showed accurately the Palmer Peninsula in the Antarctic continent.

As reported by Rand and Rose Flem-Ath in their wonderful book *Beneath the Ice: The Fate of the Lost Continent*, a transcript of the radio show is nothing less than shocking:

> *Host:* You say that these maps have been checked by the Hydrographic Office of the U.S. Navy?
>
> *Walters:* Yes.
>
> *Host:* As far as you are concerned, are they accurate?

Walters: Yes, they are.

Host: How old are the maps?

Walters: These maps go back 5,000 years and even earlier. But they contain data that go back many thousands of years previous to that.

"Walters [then] *remarked on the comparisons between the Piri Reis Map and the newly* [1954] *discovered sub-glacial features of the Queen Maud region of Antarctica:"*

"We have taken the old charts and the new charts that the Hydrographic Office produces today and made comparisons of the soundings of salient peaks and mountains. We have found them to be in astounding agreement. In this way, we have checked the old work very closely. We put very much confidence in what Captain Mallery has disclosed."

Host: Mr. Mallery, this must then lead to the conclusion that there were competent explorers and map makers along the coast of the Atlantic long before Columbus.

Mallery: Several thousand years before. Not only explorers, but they must also have had a very competent and far-flung hydrographic organization, because you cannot map as large a continent as Antarctica as we know they did—probably 5,000 years ago. It can't be done by any single individual or small group of explorers. It means an aggregation of skilled scientists who are familiar with astronomy as well as the methods required for topographic surveying.

Apparently, Columbus had access to charts not only of the "new" world but also of Antarctica!

However it all came together, Reis managed to compile what is now recognized as one of the oldest maps known to exist. He drew it on a gazelle skin that has now been dated to the year 1513. In the margins, he wrote a series of notes in which he confessed that the map was a copy of a much older document, which was now lost. His map was filed away and not seen again until its discovery. It shows the western coast of Africa, the eastern coast of South America, and the northern coastline of Antarctica.

That's what makes this map so special. The continent of Antarctica

wasn’t discovered until three hundred years after Reis drew his map. What’s even more amazing is that Antarctica has been covered by glaciers for thousands of years. The area around what we now call Queen Maud Land, shown in complete detail in Reis’s map, could not possibly have been ice free for at least six thousand years.

The continent of Antarctica wasn’t discovered until three hundred years after Reis drew his map.

The question becomes obvious. How could anyone have charted a coast that is buried by a glacier, especially one that wasn’t discovered until three hundred years after it was mapped? Traditional science insists that the rest of the area illustrated by the map has been submerged by the polar ice cap for at least a few million years, but the Piri Reis map shows topography in vivid detail. Only recently have our high-tech instruments mapped a land surface beneath the glacier.

Traditionalists claim that our civilization arose in the Middle East about five thousand years ago and that the continent of Antarctica has been buried by an ice sheet for at least the last four thousand years, probably much more, so who drew the map that Reis copied in Constantinople in the year 1513?

When one of Hapgood’s students told him about the radio show, he decided that he needed to confirm all this information himself. The results were confirmed by the cartographic staff of the Strategic Air Command, or the SAC. They sent him the following letter on July 6, 1960:

> Dear Professor Hapgood,
>
> Your request for evaluating certain unusual features of the Piri Reis World Map of 1513 by this organization has been reviewed.
>
> The claim that the lower part of the map portrays the Princess Martha coast of Queen Maud Land, Antarctica, and the Palmer Peninsula is reasonable. We find this the most logical and in all probability the correct interpretation of the map.
>
> The geographic detail shown in the lower part of the map agrees very remarkably with the results of the seismic profile made across

the top of the ice cap by the Swedish–British–Norwegian Expedition of 1949.

This indicates the coast line had been mapped before it was covered by the ice cap.

The ice cap in this region is now about a mile thick. We have no idea how the data on this map can be reconciled with the supposed state of geographic knowledge in 1513.

HAROLD Z. OHLMEYER
Lt. Colonel, USAF
Commander

Hapgood came to believe that Antarctica had been charted by an ancient Ice Age civilization, but when those ancient explorers mapped it, it lay about two thousand miles north of where it is now. It was then ice free.

At some forgotten point in time, an Earth-crust shift occurred, and it was sent very suddenly south into frigid latitudes, where it quickly developed the ice covering that it sustains to this day. He went on to suggest that some of its inhabitants, who were probably out at sea at the time, witnessed the destruction of their homeland and resigned themselves to spread out to various points on Earth where Stone Age cultures existed that might serve as a place to begin anew.

We don’t know what the ancient people called their lost civilization, but Hapgood called it Atlantis.

Could it be that the mythical continent of Atlantis actually existed and that it is now buried under a mile of ice in Antarctica? We’ll have to save that speculation for when we later look at the legends of Atlantis in Part IV.

What about today, though? Does any evidence exist, except for old maps, that a lost civilization once existed where today is only rapidly melting ice?

Beginning in 2016, claims have been coming and going on the Internet reporting that NASA and Google Earth have photos identifying a massive, underground feature that appears to be of human construction. Global warming has melted a lot of the ice that covers this area of the world, and pictures galore now show what appear to be pyramids and fourteen-mile-long structures “proving” all sorts of theories ranging from ancient aliens to governmental cover-ups. The most urgent is a video supposedly left behind,

whatever that means, by a California transportation company crew who went missing and haven’t been seen since 2002. Many believe that the Nazis knew about these claims and established a base there before World War II. UFO sightings abound. John Kerry, the former senator and secretary of state, recently visited Antarctica in what some claim was a secret mission. As in all conspiracy scenarios, everyone from the Illuminati to almost every secret society ever invented knows about this.

However, all this speculation almost served to detract rather than add to the fact that the lost history of Antarctica has some strange aspects to it. The fact is that ancient maps show it as ice free. How could that have happened? Nobody knows, but with all the focused attention the place is now receiving, you can’t help but think that it’s only a matter of time before something is revealed.

When it is, it might just prove to be spectacular!

PART III: EVIDENCE IN STORY

Bill Moyers: "You've seen what happens when primitive societies are unsettled by white man's civilization. They go to pieces, they disintegrate, they become diseased. Hasn't the same thing been happening to us since myths began to disappear?"

Joseph Campbell: "Absolutely, it has."

Bill Moyers and Joseph Campbell, The Power of Myth

VOICES FROM THE PAST

Joseph Campbell, because of his series of interviews with Bill Moyers on the PBS special *The Power of Myth*, did more to bring mythology into the public consciousness than anyone. He used to get upset when people said things such as "that's *just* a myth" or "a myth is a lie." He thought of mythology more as poetry than prose. In his view, a short myth condensed and encapsulated truth far more accurately than an extended explanation.

Take the myth of Santa Claus, for instance. Each year, magic happens during the month of December. It's bigger than any one person and involves billions of people. Without being guided by any person or organization, the power of a full-blown, unstoppable myth, bigger than any of us, kicks into gear, causing us to spend money ("How many shopping days until Christmas?" "Do you have your Christmas shopping done?" "Are Christmas sales up?"), gather with family ("I'll be home for Christmas!"), eat too much ("Save us some figgy pudding!"), and generally have so much fun that sometimes we can't wait until it's over.

Washington Irving was an American essayist/historian who briefly mentioned the Dutch customs surrounding St. Nicholas in his *Knickerbocker History of New York*. Few people read the book, and that might have been the end of our whole Santa myth in America were it not for Clement C. Moore. In 1823, while reading Irving's *Knickerbocker History*, Moore was inspired to write a poem called "A Visit from Saint Nicholas." In it (largely to make his lines scan correctly), he labeled Santa a "right jolly old elf."

Forty years later, the poem was scheduled to be included in a holiday issue of *Harper's Magazine*. The editor felt that an illustration would be helpful, so he called on cartoonist Thomas Nast, who hadn't the foggiest idea what a Dutch "jolly old elf" should look like. Remembering his own holiday traditions, however, Nast drew up a Bavarian-based gnome who dressed in animal skins and frightened naughty children with a broomstick. The poem was a hit, if not the cartoon, and over the years, illustrations of Santa were cleaned up a little so as to appear more child friendly.

The whole Santa myth evolved to the point where, in 1897, Francis Church, writing for the *New York Sun* newspaper, felt moved to respond to a question from a young reader named Virginia O'Hanlon. "Please tell me the

truth," Miss O'Hanlon asked. "Is there a Santa Claus?"

What she was asking was a simple question. "Is Santa Claus just a myth?"

Church's answer was the now famous article, "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus." He acknowledged that the myth was real in the sense that it encapsulated a reality bigger than the story itself. "Magic" happened at Christmas time, and the myth of Santa represented a reality.

In 1931, the myth went viral. Santa got his big publicity break. The Coca-Cola Company wanted to increase sales to children but were boxed in by a law that forbade any public displays of children drinking their product. At that time, Coca-Cola was based on coca, thought to be a narcotic plant. (It has since changed its recipe!) Because the company's marketing department couldn't show children drinking Coke, it featured a child-friendly Santa with a red suit, smile, ruddy cheeks, and a winning demeanor. He was pictured taking a well-deserved break from his Christmas duties drinking a bottle of Coke, which a friendly child had left for him. Coke sales went through the roof, and the rest, as they say, is history. Santa and Coca-Cola went on to conquer the world together.

The earliest traditions of the many components of the Santa myth, however, go back in time much further than the Dutch holiday customs. Indeed, long before he came to America—Santa was a shaman.

Consider just a few of the motifs of the "Christ-Mass" that have nothing to do with Christian mythology:

- *The Fire Tree*: The gift of fire was probably the most important discovery in the history of the human race. Long ago, the tribal shaman, or holy man, would lead ceremonies in which gifts would be placed on an evergreen tree or bush such as holly, ivy, or mistletoe, then burned in ritual sacrifice, returning to the gods a portion of what the people had received. These trees and plants featured their colorful berries in the winter, so they were deemed holy at this time of year. The ceremony took place on the night of the Winter Solstice, the longest night of the year, in order to ensure that the Sun would soon return and bring its welcoming warmth with it. When the custom of actually bringing the tree inside the house began, candles were substituted for fire. Nowadays, electric lights are much safer.

The traditions of Christmas that we celebrate almost all come from various pagan traditions, including gift giving, Christmas trees, Yule logs, and Santa's entrance from a chimney.

- *The Yule Log*: In northern European tradition, a Yule log was dragged into the village square during the short days of December. No one really knows where the word "Yule" comes from. Lots of theories exist, of course, but the shamanic practice of burning a huge log or tree during the darkest night of the year is a widespread tradition.
- *The Chimney Entrance*: Eastern European stories often took advantage of the chimney to have a Santa figure enter an otherwise barricaded house. It was a good way to deliver presents to good little boys and girls. Of course, the tradition of smoke carrying the prayers of the faithful to God helped the illusion.
- *Defying Time*: A good shaman was able to step out of time and be in many places at once. How else could Santa keep up his hectic pace, covering the whole world in a single night? As for his mode of transportation, the word "shaman" itself is a Siberian word

derived from the language of the Tungusic people, who lived in the far north. They, of course, herded reindeer.

- *Feasting and Gift Giving*: At the time of the long winter's darkest nights, shamanic cultures often gathered to feast and sing the night away. The shaman, being the carrier of knowledge, "knew when you were sleeping and knew when you were awake. He knew when you were bad or good, so be good for goodness' sake!"

By the time Christianity spread throughout Europe, the whole Santa tradition, although it varied greatly from place to place, was firmly entrenched. People were not about to give it up, but it was pagan to the core. What was a poor parish priest to do when his congregation gathered around the village Yule fire to celebrate with song and dance?

The answer was simple and obvious. "If you can't beat 'em, baptize 'em!" Although the Bible never claims a December birth for Christ, it made perfect sense to have its Savior born at the time of the December solstice. After all, that was when Mithras, the shamanic "Soldier God" of Rome, was born. His worship featured a virgin birth, a last meal of bread and wine shared with his disciples, and a promise to return.

The symbols were easily transferable. Thus, the two traditions of Shamanism and Christianity became intertwined and today exist in harmony. "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus" and "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" are, for the most part, interchangeable on the holiday radio playlists. "We Three Kings" travels in the same lane as "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer." Gene Autry made sure to keep things in their proper place by picturing Santa kneeling at the cradle of Jesus—but to separate the two traditions is now almost impossible.

The symbols were easily transferable. Thus, the two traditions of Shamanism and Christianity became intertwined and today exist in harmony.

What all this means is that although the Santa myth may not be

historically accurate in all its particulars, you can't understand Western culture without acknowledging its truth. A scientist, upon finding no evidence of a North Pole workshop, can insist that Santa is "just" a myth and discount the whole story, but that would be an incomplete assumption. Everyone "knows" that Santa is real. "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus." That's what a good myth does. It acknowledges reality.

Think of it this way. If you ask what a human being is, a physicist will submit a detailed, multiple-volume explanation consisting of definitions of particles, electrons, atoms, and force fields. A biologist will go on and on about DNA, cells, and tissue. A physician will refer you to a whole library about viruses, blood flow, and interacting organ systems. A chemist will talk at length about neuron responses sparking chemical reactions in the brain. A psychiatrist will bring up neuroses and obsessions. A philosopher will expound on cognitive similarities throughout history.

They will all be right, but you won't live long enough to read it all, let alone absorb all the prose. Far better to turn to poetry. Here's how Shakespeare's *Hamlet* summed it up in Act 2, Scene 2 of the famous play:

> What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world. The paragon of animals.

Short and to the point, simple and memorable, all-encompassing but easily grasped, and true! If you just arrived from some alien planet and want to know what kind of species dominates the world, you can read those forty-five words and know all you need to know. All the technical stuff is important for a detailed analysis, but it's all icing on the cake. Shakespeare captured the essence in a single paragraph.

In Part II, "Evidence in Stone," we looked at the material physiology of our origins. We presented facts and artifacts, the mysterious things our ancestors left behind. They weren't at all mysterious to them, mind you. They knew perfectly well what they were doing and why it was so important for them to do it, but we don't know what they were thinking. That's why the evidence is so mysterious. We are suffering from historical amnesia.

In Part III, "Evidence in Story," we're going to try to get inside their minds and hearts. We're not going to look for Santa's artifacts. We're going to look for his soul. We're going to examine the clues left behind in oral

history that go back, in some cases, thousands upon thousands of years. We're going to attempt to piece together the story of our ancestors, remembering that *their* story is *our* story. In short, we're going to search out the reality of who we are and how we got here. We'll look for the true origins of humanity. So far, we've been asking *who*, *what*, *where*, and *when*. Now we're going to ask *why*.

It's a daunting task, but perhaps the place where legend says it all began is the best place to start: in Eden.

EDEN

And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden.

—Genesis 2:8

The most recognized mythology in the world is probably that which surrounds the mysterious Eden, believed by a large amount of the world's population to be the place everything began. A quick Google search on the Internet will bring up more than 425,000,000 references.

If you want to conduct an interesting psychological experiment, mention the word "Eden" at a party and watch the reactions you get. Some people will scoff and turn away in disgust. They are the ones who are completely disillusioned by what they consider to be the ignorant, superstitious nonsense of a discredited religion. Others will nod their heads in quiet contemplation. They will no doubt have studied the subject from a philosophical point of view, considering it a mythological representation of some kind of deeply rooted separation complex endemic to all of humanity. Still others will bring

up the latest archaeological evidence purporting to have discovered the actual location of a physical place on Earth.

Many more reactions will occur as well, but unless the gathering consists of people from different parts of the world, probably no one will bring up the fact that as many different ways of interpreting the story exist exist as there are interpreters. Nevertheless, the subject has a few general theories.

The Genesis Eden Story

> Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the East, in Eden, and there he put the man he had formed.
>
> —Genesis 2:8

In the Western world, interpretations generally are centered around the biblical version of the Eden story found in the book of Genesis. It is a puzzling tale. God creates a man and a woman, places them in a blissful garden called Eden, and tells them, in effect, “The whole place is yours with only one rule: Stay away from the two trees that are forbidden. One is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eat one apple from that tree, and you will be banished. The other is the tree of life. Eat the fruit of that tree, and you will live forever.”

Of course, everyone knows what happens next. The devil, in the form of a serpent, appears to Eve, the first woman, and tempts her three times. Eventually, she gives in, eats the fruit, gives some to her husband, and thus subjects the whole human race to an incredibly long and backbreaking future. Adam, the man, blames his wife. Eve blames the serpent. The serpent, with no one left to accuse, presumably slithers away. The rest, as they say, is history.

The outcome of the story is, to put it quite simply, pain. Eve would henceforth give birth in pain. Adam would be forced to work by the sweat of his brow. The snake’s punishment was to thereafter crawl through the dust on his belly. Even God experienced the pain of being “grieved.”

This interpretation of the story, then, introduces the central idea of duality—of right and wrong—of God and the devil—of sin and, eventually, atonement.

To some people, the story makes perfect sense, even though the details are quite preposterous. A talking snake? Forbidden fruit from trees that seem quite valuable in terms of human growth? A vengeful god who must have known from the beginning exactly what would happen? Really?

No wonder other people consider it a silly, illogical story with no basis in fact and no message worth heeding.

However, think about it for a minute. This text, after all, shaped the worldview of three great religions. Give it some serious thought, and a different story emerges.

Nowhere in the book of Genesis does it say that the serpent is the devil. That identification doesn't take place until the very last book of the Bible, in Revelation 20, verses 1 and 2:

> And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.

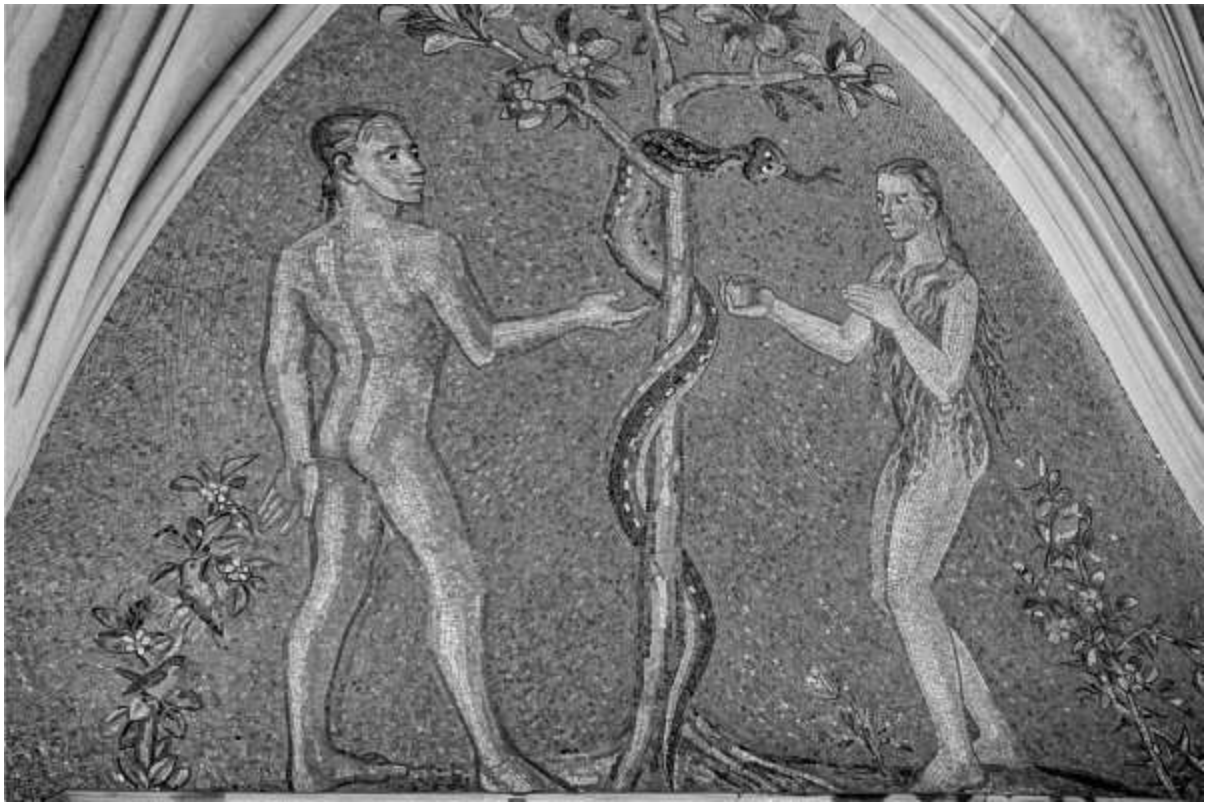
These verses from Revelation were written long, long after the Genesis story. They are, after all, Christian writings. Genesis is Jewish. However, the link between the serpent and the devil remains firm in most people's minds, even though it is not to be found in the original story. Also, notice that "the serpent" is firmly linked to "the dragon." According to the Christian author, they are one and the same.

Sometimes, it is a good exercise to reread a familiar story and look for different ways to think about it. What if these verses were found in some ancient text other than the revered and tradition-hallowed Bible? Would we read it differently? If we perform this exercise with the familiar Genesis account of the fall of humankind, a totally different reading of the myth arises. Not the only one, to be sure, but interesting just the same.

It is often said that history is written by the winners. What if this myth is just that? What if it is really a Jewish story that recalls the defeat of one civilization's system and the rise of another? In other words, what if it tells the winner's version of the overthrow of the old, Earth-based, shamanic, goddess-inspired, pagan religion by the newer, emerging, patriarchal religion that forms the Judeo/Christian/Muslim tradition?

The serpent offers humankind freedom—the "knowledge of good and

evil”—the ability to choose. Good and evil represent the familiar world of duality—of up and down and right and wrong. “God knows that when you eat of (the fruit), your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil,” says the old, Earth-based, pagan religion represented by the serpent.



A mosaic above a door at Saint Vitus Cathedral in Prague, Czech Republic, depicts the familiar story of the serpent tempting Eve with the fruit of knowledge of Good and Evil. But does the serpent really represent the Devil, or is there some other message here?

What’s wrong with that? After all, Christianity claims that that was God’s intention from the beginning—to adopt us into the divine family. It emphasizes that we are brothers to Jesus and “no more slave or free, male or female, rich or poor.” If that is okay now, why wasn’t it all right then?

This is because when these stories were first told, the times were changing. A new religion had arisen. The wise women of Earth-based paganism were now relegated to the back pews of the church. Men were in charge. The new tradition was to be one of top-down patriarchy.

Therefore, right from the beginning, in the very first chapters of the very first book of the Bible, the founders felt it was important to lay down the new

law. Earth-based, mother goddess-worshipping, equality-bestowing, pagan religion was henceforth seen as the work of the devil. Eve, and all women, were therefore put in their place.

That old serpent, now recognized as the devil, or Satan, was bound for a thousand years. Patriarchal religion had won. They told the story to each succeeding generation right down to the present day.

Even the children of Adam and Eve carried out the will of the new religion. According to the story, Abel was a humble follower of sheep. He was a pastoralist, following the herds from place to place. He was free.

This didn't fit Cain's scheme. Cain marked the beginning of the Agricultural Revolution and was a builder of cities. He was a farmer, a tiller of the soil, and couldn't have people like Abel wandering around on open range that was better suited for crops and towns.

Thus, Cain killed Abel. The agriculturist killed the pastoralist. In doing so, he and his fellow farmers sent humankind off on a totally new route. It marked the birth of agriculture.

Gone was the goddess. Gone was the equality of the sexes. Gone was the freedom of new horizons and wandering tribes. Instead, the female goddess morphed into the male god. Tribes settled down, planted crops, invented specialized occupations with unions, built walls and screened-in porches, moved indoors, and invented computers with lovely, pastoral scenes as screen savers to remind them of an age gone by.

In a slightly different form, this story is repeated in the Bible a few pages later. In Numbers, chapter 21, the people of Israel, having escaped from Egypt, were wandering around in the Sinai Desert in the midst of their forty-year trek to the Promised Land. In the previous chapter, Aaron, the High Priest of the new religion, had died. Obviously, things must have been in a bit of a religious upheaval. The people were complaining about their lot in life and looking for answers. "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? We have no bread! We have no water!"

The caduceus, the symbol of the medical profession, has two snakes beneath a pair of wings, a possible reference to the biblical story of Moses using a bronze serpent to heal his people.

In response, the Lord “sent venomous serpents among them; they bit the people, and many Israelites died.”

Moses, facing a communitywide scourge, went up a mountain to converse with God. He came down with a rather radical idea. He told the people to create a bronze serpent and place it on a pole in the middle of the camp. From that time on, whenever someone was bitten by a serpent, they had only to look at the graven image they had created and be cured.

You can see a reminder of this story whenever you visit your doctor. Although the image of a serpent wound around a pole is given many interpretive explanations, you will find it stamped on his or her diploma. This is at least one explanation for the iconography.

How could it be that the same god who, in the Ten Commandments, commanded the people not to make any “graven images” now urged the people to do that which he had previously forbidden them?

What if the story is about more than sin and atonement? What if it is a

mythological representation of actual history—an oral mythology that recalls a time when the serpent, the dragon representing paganism, was the religious hope of the people? What if it records a revival of the spirituality that previously nourished and sustained people worldwide? Then things begin to fall into place.

Moses, for instance, walks out into the desert with his "rod" and finds water. Doesn't that sound like dowsing—an ancient pagan practice later called divination and forbidden by the church?

The Ark of the Covenant was carved with two angels on its lid, but the "angels" have great wings that span the top to touch each other. The people later built a golden calf and danced around it. Don't these images sound like animal effigies, which are no different from those described in shamanic experiences and carved on stones around the world?

Apparently, the old religion lived on for quite some time in Israel. In 1 Kings 18:4, long after Moses, Samuel, Saul, David, and Solomon had lived and died, the people were still worshipping the image of the serpent. The practice was so prevalent that during a Jewish revival under King Hezekiah:

> He removed the high places where the people had erected standing stones for altars, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah *(the name of the goddess)* poles *(these were the precursors to Maypoles).* He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it.

According to this account, the traditional Jewish scribes who wrote the Old Testament finally killed off the old pagan religion.

Did they? Some evidence exists that later Christian writers had to deal with the same issue. They did so in the same way they dealt with other pagan rituals. They simply baptized the tradition. In one of the most revered texts of Christendom, John 3:16, we read how they did it:

"You must be born again," says Jesus.

"What does that mean?" asks Nicodemus.

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," replies Jesus, "so the Son of man must be lifted up."

Snakes are everywhere in Christian stories, including the tale of St. Patrick driving out the snakes from Ireland, as depicted in this church fresco.

The old pagan religion of the serpent was apparently still being practiced by some of the common folks. It refused to die, so its central core was made to symbolize the new religion of Christianity. The serpent on the pole was turned into Christ on the cross.

It didn't end there. Well into the Christian era, when paganism, the religion of the serpent, was still fresh in the minds of those who had found spirituality in its power, the Gospel writers recognized the need to further drive out the practice. The author of the Gospel of Mark, in chapter 16, verse 18, foresaw the day when those who practiced the new religion of the

resurrected Jesus would be able to defeat the old ways. “They will pick up snakes with their hands,” he declared.

A legend was born. When Christianity entered the serpent’s holy Celtic stronghold, the last holdout of the old religion, it was said that St. Patrick himself drove out the serpents from Ireland and ushered in the new faith.

Other conquests occurred as well. When the people continued to worship at the time of the Winter Solstice, Jesus was suddenly said to have been born on December 25.

When people climbed mountains and sang hymns at sunrise at the time of the Spring Equinox, Easter began to be celebrated at the same time and in the same way.

Thus, the story of Eden gradually became the central story of Christianity—but other Eden stories paint quite a different picture.

THE SUMERIAN EDEN STORY

When in the height heaven was not named,
And the earth beneath did not yet bear a name,
And the primeval Apsu, who begat them,
And chaos, Tiamut, the mother of them both
Their waters were mingled together,
And no field was formed, no marsh was to be seen;
When of the gods none had been called into being,
And none bore a name, and no destinies were ordained;
Then were created the gods in the midst of heaven,
Lahmu and Lahamu were called into being.…

—Enuma Elish

Sumer, in Mesopotamia, was called “the land of civilized kings.” It reached its peak around 6,500 years ago, when it had the distinction of being a very advanced civilization with a sophisticated written language, magnificent architecture, complex mathematics, and amazing astronomy. Hundreds of gods comprised its religious system. Although humans and the gods once shared Earth together, they didn’t share a coequal existence. Humans, they believed, were designed for the express purpose of serving the gods.

When the gods like men
Bore the work and suffered the toll
The toil of the gods was great,

The work was heavy, the distress was much.

The chief god, Anu, recognized that things couldn't continue as they were, so he commissioned his son, Enki (Ea), and his daughter, Ninki (Enki's half-sister), to do something about the problem.

Their solution was to create humans by sacrificing a god, mixing his body and blood with clay, and forming the first human being made in the likeness of the gods.

You have slaughtered a god together
With his personality
I have removed your heavy work
I have imposed your toil on man.…
In the clay, god and man
Shall be bound,
To a unity brought together;
So that to the end of days
The Flesh and the Soul
Which in a god have ripened—
That soul in a blood-kinship be bound.

According to Sumerian mythology, humanlike gods called Anunnaki had initially come to mine resources that were needed on their home planet. Now with the creation of a human labor force, their duties were changed. They ruled over what was, for all practical purposes, a human slave race. Their base of operations was Mesopotamia, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. In *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, the world's first epic poem, it was called Eden.

At first, according to the texts, humans were unable to reproduce on their own. This proved inconvenient, so Enki and Ninki found a way to modify the new species. The result was a man called Adapa, a fully functional and independent human being.

Enki had given Adapa great wisdom and the ability to conceive of eternal life, but Adapa's curse was that he could never attain that which he was able to conceive.

Were it not for the Amarna texts, discovered all the way over in Egypt in the archives of the Egyptian king Amenophis, we might never know about Adapa, but in 1912, his story was verified and confirmed by a unique

discovery in the Library of Ashurbanipal. Five partial fragments, since translated, were revealed that told part of the story, which was called *Adapa and the South Wind*.

According to the story, Adapa had risen to the position of priest or sage. One day, while fishing in the Persian Gulf, the sea became rough, and his boat capsized. Adapa became angry and "broke the wings of the south wind." He prevented it from blowing for seven days and nights.

This, of course, caught the attention of the god Anu, who wanted to punish Adapa for the sin of hubris, but Enki came to Adapa's aid. He instructed him to journey to the abode of the goddess Tammuz, who, along with Gishzida, stood guard at the gates of heaven. While there, he was told not to eat or drink anything because heavenly food would kill him.

Adapa put on traditional sackcloth and ashes, the garb of mourning, and appeared before Tammuz and Gishzida, claiming that he was in mourning because the two gods had disappeared from his land. Ever hospitable, they offered Adapa food and drink. Forewarned, he refused.

In Sumerian mythology, Enki, one of the sons of the god Anu, plays the role of telling Adapa (in the role of Adam) not to eat of the forbidden fruit, which in this case provides immortality versus the biblical version, which provides the knowledge.

Only later did he come to understand that he had made a mistake. When he was brought before Anu, Anu asked why he hadn't eaten the food that had been placed before him. He said it was because Enki had told him not to eat "the bread and water of life."

At this, Anu laughed. "What ill has Adapa brought on mankind?" If Adapa had partaken of the food, he would have obtained immortality. As it

is, humankind, the creation of Enki, would henceforth suffer disease and death. In Genesis, God forbid the first man from eating from the tree of immortality. In the Sumerian version, it was Enki.

Adapa was then sent back down to Earth.

Now the plot thickens. Enki's brother, Enlil, hadn't been told about Enki's work. He had wanted only an obedient slave race, and now, Enki was tinkering with things like wisdom and eternal life. Enlil and Enki fought, and the battle still rages.

Enlil advised the gods that he was going to destroy the newly created human race with a great flood. Afterward, he reasoned, they could start over from scratch, but Enki overheard the plans and contacted a righteous man named Utnapishtim. We read about him earlier in the chapter about Mesopotamia:

> So [Enki] decided to help Utnapishtim and his wife escape the deluge by building a boat. Utnapishtim was given precise dimensions to follow, finally sealing the hull with pitch and bitumen. Just in time, he loaded it with "all the animals of the field," gathered his family aboard, and was able to float to safety after a strong storm arose that was terrifying even to the gods, who retreated to the safety of the heavens.
>
> The boat eventually lodged on a mountain top, and Utnapishtim released first a dove, then a swallow, and finally a raven. The dove and swallow returned to the safety of the boat, but the raven didn't come back. This convinced Utnapishtim that there must be dry land somewhere, and he knew he could safely disembark.…
>
> Thus, Utnapishtim and his wife were the only two humans ever granted eternal life on earth by the gods as a result of their faithfulness.

As we read all this, it's important to remember that the Sumerians didn't believe they were the earliest human civilization. They claimed to have received all this from an earlier civilization that had, by their time, become extinct. Who comprised this civilization, and where they came from, is a mystery.

Added to the dilemma is the fact that when we read a text such as the Bible, we are reading the edited work of scholars who lived centuries ago.

They made choices, compiling one work and condensing another, so it seems as if we are reading a seamless book written by one author.

No one ever did that with ancient Sumerian texts. We read a little of this and a little of that, from here and there, and the story doesn't seem as uniform as the familiar Hebrew text. On top of that, some of the old texts are written in Sumerian hieroglyphs, some in Babylonian cuneiform, and others in ancient Egyptian. A modern editor has a lot to choose from and can snip a little from one text or another, confident that most of us, who don't read any of the ancient languages, will be none the wiser.

Remember that when you listen to a modern TV expert confidently telling you what the Sumerian text "says." The truth is, it's a very confusing field of study and is in a constant state of flux.

That being said, we can survey a number of Sumerian origin poems as long as we remember that none of them is complete. All that remains are fragments. Nevertheless, it's important to read them because Sumer is considered by many historians to be the first civilization. Any search of our origins, therefore, has to begin with Sumerian sources. Who knows what history might be hidden within these tablets?

Four thousand years ago, for instance, someone transcribed a poem called "The Song of the Hoe." Sometimes, the word "hoe" is translated as "pickaxe." No one knows for sure which it is, but it seems to refer to a tool that is used to break up the earth in preparation for planting. In this poem, Enlil, not Enki, is credited for creating the first man "from the dust of the earth":

> Not only did the lord make the world appear in its correct form—the lord who never changes the destinies which he determines: Enlil, who will make the human seed of the Land come forth from the earth. And so daylight broke forth. By distributing the shares of duty he established daily tasks, and for the hoe and the carrying—basket wages were established. He looked with favor at his black-headed people. Now the Annuna gods stepped forward to him, and did obeisance to him. They calmed Enlil with a prayer, for they wanted to demand the black-headed people from him. Ninmena, the lady who had given birth to the ruler, who had given birth to the king, now set human reproduction going.

This is the poem that seems to say that humans were created to serve the

gods (the Annuna). Their service seemed to involve the carrying of “baskets,” a job that the Annuna didn’t enjoy. It also implies that somehow, through the work of the goddess Ninmena (Ninki), the ability to reproduce was given to humanity.

Echoes of Genesis resonate in this poem. In the biblical story, humans are condemned to slavery of a sort. When banished from Eden, they are forced to earn their bread “by the sweat of their brow.” Every Monday morning, millions of people still feel that slavery as they are forced to head off to work.

As for reproduction, the very first thing Adam did after leaving the garden was to “know” his wife and produce two sons.

Another Sumerian poem is called “The Debate Between Grain and Sheep”:

> When, upon the hill of heaven and earth, Anu spawned the Annuna gods, since he neither spawned nor created Grain with them, and since in the Land he neither fashioned the yarn of *[the goddess of weaving]* nor pegged out the *(first)* loom, for with no Sheep appearing, there were no numerous lambs, and with no goats, there were no numerous kids, the sheep did not give birth to her twin lambs, and the goat did not give birth to her triplet kids; the Annuna, the great gods, did not even know the names “grain” or “sheep,” so there was no cloth to wear or bread to eat. They did not know about wearing clothes; they went about with naked limbs in the Land. Like sheep they ate grass with their mouths and drank water from the ditches.

Sumerian origin stories and those in the Bible can be seen as an expression of the conflict that arose between the hunter-gatherer society of old and the rise of agricultural societies.

The story goes on to talk about the gods creating both grain and sheep. Eventually:

> They filled the store-rooms of the Land with stock. The barns of the Land were heavy with them. When they entered the homes of the poor who crouch in the dust they brought wealth. Both of them, wherever they directed their steps, added to the riches of the household with their weight. Where they stood, they were satisfying; where they settled, they were seemly. They gladdened the heart of Anu and Enlil.

Eventually, the grain and sheep begin to argue about who was most important. At this point, Enki enters the picture:

> Enki spoke to Enlil: “Sheep and Grain should be sisters! They should stand together! But of the two, Grain shall be the greater.

> Let Sheep fall on her knees before Grain. From sunrise till sunset, may the name of Grain be praised. People should submit to the yoke of Grain. Whoever has silver, whoever has jewels, whoever has cattle, whoever has sheep, shall take a seat at the gate of whoever has grain, and pass his time there."

Once again, we hear echoes from Genesis. Abel is a keeper of sheep. Cain is a farmer who raises grain. They both bring an offering to God. However, this is where the stories part company. In the Bible, the sheep win out. Abel's sacrifice is deemed acceptable. Cain, in a fit of jealousy, murders his brother.

This story is often seen as a metaphor describing the triumph of the Agricultural Revolution over the former nomadic, herding way of life. Since the traditional story emphasized that along with the invention of agriculture came the birth of cities and civilization, it was no surprise that Cain, the agriculturalist, murdered his brother, the nomadic herder, then went out and built the first city. Agriculture thus sparked the first civilization. It seemed cut-and-dried.

In the earlier Sumerian version, though, it is the grain offering that is accepted by the gods. It's as if Cain's offering is accepted instead of Abel's. This is a significant difference. Why the change?

As we've said so often before, no one knows.

"The Debate Between Bird and Fish" is an essay that addresses the subject of water. Enki had created the Tigris and the Euphrates river systems and filled them with fish and birds. He founded cities along their courses and established rulers and kingships, but birds and fish, just like sheep and grain, started to argue about which species was more important. First, the fish spoke:

> Croaking—noise in the marshes—squawking! Forever gobbling away greedily, while your heart is dripping with evil! Standing on the plain you can keep pecking away until they chase you off!
>
> The farmer's sons lay lines and nets for you. You cause damage in the vegetable plots. Bird, you are shameless: you fill the courtyard with your droppings. The courtyard sweeper-boy who cleans the house chases after you.

Then, the bird summed up his position:

> How has your heart become so arrogant, while you yourself are so lowly? Your mouth is flabby, and although it goes all the way round, you cannot see behind you. You are bereft of hips, as also of arms, hands and feet. Try bending your neck to your feet! Your smell is awful. You make people throw up. They sneer at you!

It was finally decided that the bird is more important because, at least to Enki, it tastes better.

Many more poems and debates are out there, but one of the most important is called “Enki and the World Order.” In this myth, Enki decided that the world needed to be managed by the gods, or it would descend into chaos. He appointed various gods to oversee such activities as managing the use of water and crops, the building of cities, the herding of domestic animals, the oversight of the heavens, and … (wait for it) … managing the activities of women.

Both the Genesis Eden story and the Sumerian Eden story thus tell us a lot about the thinking of the ancients. In some ways, they address identical issues and help us understand what was going on in the minds of the old ones at the time of the birth of civilization. We have seen that they can be read as metaphors for historical precedents such as the Agricultural Revolution and city building. They are an attempt to explain why things are the way they are in the world. They point back to an earlier civilization, now lost to history. They reveal that our ancestors thought long and hard about philosophy and psychology. They point to what was even back then considered a lost, golden age—Paradise. They try to plumb the depths of human behavior and ask questions about the nature of good and evil.

Both the Genesis Eden story and the Sumerian Eden story thus tell us a lot about the thinking of the ancients.

In that sense, things haven’t changed a great deal in the last five thousand years, but these two stories can be read in another way. In some ways, they are very different.

Anton Parks is a French scholar who has devoted years to the Sumerian

texts, even going so far as to translate them himself. He points out that the Bible pictures our ancient ancestors as being very happy in Paradise. In the Sumerian texts, however, they are living in a concentration camp. In his translation, God doesn't plant a garden for humankind in which he "walks in the cool of the evening." His version says the gods "came in strength from beyond time. They were carried, one day, by the rebellion of the universe." His gods, the Annuna, were very real entities from beyond, who represented a patriarchal and a matriarchal regime. Enlil, the so-called "evil" god who wanted to enslave the human race, was quite different from Enki, who befriended them.

The feminine presence, represented by Ninki, is often portrayed as a reptilian figure. Could she have been the inspiration for the serpent in the Eden of Genesis? If that is the case, then the serpent wasn't evil at all. She was trying to free humankind by offering them the gift of the knowledge of good and evil. She then wanted them to eat of the tree of life and "be like gods." It was a good thing she was doing, not a bad one.

However, Enlil won the day. He cast humans out of the garden before they ate of the tree of life. Since history is both interpreted and written by the winners, Enlil's story was told in Genesis, not Enki's. That explains why the Genesis account makes such a big deal about placing sword-wielding cherubim, or "Shining Ones," at the entrance to Eden in order to ensure that humans never attain the godhead, or eternal life.

It has been said that the smartest thing the devil ever did was to convince humans that he didn't exist. This reading of the Sumerian myth goes one step further. It says that the smartest thing the devil ever did was to convince humans that he was God.

According to Anton Parks, YHVH of the Jewish scriptures and the Christian Old Testament, translated "the Lord," is not the Creator. The creator is Enlil, the enslaver of humankind, henceforth known as the Demiurge. He is head of the patriarchal system that wants to suppress freedom, especially the freedom of women. He doesn't want equality. He wants subservient slaves. He doesn't want creative, right-brained, intuitive thinkers. He wants left-brained, obedient servants who are forced to work each and every day.

Ekur, the mountain house temple in Naffur, Iraq, was a place of worship for the Sumerian god Enlil. It was Enlil who, according to myth, cast humans from the garden in a story similar to the Garden of Eden tale in the Bible.

This reading of the story says that humans were upright-walking animals who were modified through DNA manipulation to fill the role of worker bees. The word Adam in Sumerian, according to Parks, means “animal.” Eden consists of the words *E*, meaning “home,” and *den*, which means “life.” Satan in Sumerian means “the Administrator.”

Enki managed to grant wisdom to humans when he, through Ninki, the “serpent” of Eden, gave them the ability to discern good and evil. That caught Enlil by surprise. The best he could do was to drive them out of Eden and forbid their return.

To put it bluntly, according to this reading of the story, the god who monotheists have been worshipping for the last five thousand years is not Jehovah, the creator God. He is Enlil, the patriarchal Demiurge—Satan himself. This explains the god of the Old Testament who sent the Flood to destroy humankind, who commanded the Israelites to kill innocent Canaanite women and children, who was the justification for the Crusades and the Inquisition, who seems so incredibly bloodthirsty. It explains why the author of 1 John in the New Testament could declare that “we know we are of God and the whole world is in the hands of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). He

recognized that humans have been fighting the good fight, trying to get back to Eden.

The Gnostics were an early Christian sect that was declared heretical by the Roman establishment. The church burned their scriptures and made sure that none of them, except for, perhaps, the Gospel of John, made it into the New Testament.…

We are here on Earth to learn the lessons of duality, the "knowledge of good and evil," but we are caught in a divine battle of competing spiritual forces. We still need to "earn our daily bread by the sweat of our brow." It's just that we have turned our curse into a search for meaning. We want to get back to Paradise.

Evidence in the Gnostic texts, discovered in Nag Hammadi, Egypt, in 1945, indicates that it sympathized with this version of the story. The Gnostics were an early Christian sect that was declared heretical by the Roman establishment. The church burned their scriptures and made sure that none of them, except for, perhaps, the Gospel of John, made it into the New Testament, but with the discovery of books that had been hidden away and kept from destruction, we now know that to the Gnostics, wisdom, or "Sophia," represented a feminine energy that refused to be kept buried. She was the Creator, the "Logos," or Word of God.

The Gnostics believed that a bigger game was being played out by forces outside of planet Earth. The universe is bigger than we realize, they declared. As a matter of fact, the universe is simply one cell in the immense body (multiverse) that is God. Here on Earth, the battle between good and evil, between the feminine and the masculine, between Enki and Enlil, the battle called duality, is raging, but good will eventually triumph.

We do have an angel on one shoulder and a devil on the other. Their names are Enki and Enlil. Earth may be the domain of the Demiurge, but that domain itself is called "Mother Earth," the creation of Sophia, the goddess of wisdom, the divine spark that Enlil, the devil, strives to put out. The Demiurge may dominate our day-to-day reality, but Eden still awaits if we can only persevere—and we are not alone in the battle.

This is a completely different reading than the biblical account many of us grew up with and, whether we read it allegorically or historically, it causes us to pause and think about what we have been taught in our impressionistic youth—to contemplate the idea that we are involved in something a lot bigger than we thought.

All this still keeps us immersed in mythology and metaphor. Has evidence been found that Eden, the birthplace of our civilization, might have really existed? Could a place on Earth exist where everything began, at least for us?

With the discovery of the temple complex at Göbekli Tepe, such an idea, long scorned in academic circles, has once again taken root.

The Anatolian Eden Story

> Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
>
> A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.
>
> —Genesis 2:8–14

Nowadays, if you want to return to Eden, you have to take Highway 5651. That's the route that traverses the southeastern Anatolia region of Turkey and leads right to the place it all began.

At least that's what Tom Knox claimed in his 2009 book *The Genesis Secret*. In it, he recounts meeting Klaus Schmidt, the archaeologist who discovered what has become the most famous archaeological dig in the world. Knox asked Schmidt if he thought that Göbekli Tepe was the Garden of Eden. Knox claimed that Schmidt replied that it was a "temple in Eden," sparking spectacular headlines all around the world that Eden had been

found. Schmidt later confided to Andrew Collins that he had been misquoted. What he had actually said was that Göbekli Tepe was “an Eden-like place.”

The late German archaeologist Klaus Schmidt, who was a specialist in that region of Turkey, led the excavation at Göbekli Tepe.

Whatever was actually said, the area of southeastern Turkey certainly resembles the description found in Genesis. For years, those who considered the Eden story to be a historical description of a physical place located it farther south, down in the region of the Persian Gulf. No one knew where the two mysterious rivers called Pishon and Gihon were, but everyone was familiar with the Tigris and the Euphrates. They encompassed Mesopotamia, the “Land Between the Rivers,” and eventually flowed out to the Persian Gulf. Eden, it was thought, had long since been submerged beneath the rising waters of the Gulf itself.

The trouble is that any careful reading of Genesis makes it abundantly clear that Eden wasn’t positioned where the waters came together. It existed at the place of the headwaters, where the four rivers separated. That definitely refers to the mountains of southeastern Turkey.

For centuries, people simply brushed such ideas aside because the lower sections of the Tigris and Euphrates were a lot more archaeologically interesting. That's where Babylon is. That's where so much biblical history was supposed to have taken place. Nothing up north was worthy of attention.

Then came the discovery of the great temple complex of Göbekli Tepe, and a lot of other details began to fall into place.

Professor Manfred Heun from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, an expert on cereals, discovered that the world's first single-grain wheat, called einkorn, was domesticated about 10,500 years ago only twenty miles northwest of Göbekli Tepe. It marked the beginning of the Agricultural Revolution. Adam, you will remember from the book of Genesis, was consigned to work in the fields after his expulsion from Eden. Presumably, he spent his days hoeing fields of einkorn.

The Genesis story makes it clear that in the land of Havilah, wherever that is, "there is much gold." The Sumerians believed that the original purpose of creating a human slave race was that the gods wanted a labor force that could mine gold.

Cain, the Bible notes, after being expelled from the presence of God, went out and built a city. Baalbek, in Lebanon, is considered by many people to be built on the location of the most ancient city in the world. Was it Cain's city?

Moving forward to the time of the great Flood, Noah's Ark was said to have landed on Mount Ararat. Mount Ararat is in eastern Turkey.

Moving forward in time again, we come to the birthplace of the patriarch Abraham. According to the Bible, he was from "Ur of the Chaldeans." Ur is now thought by many scholars to be the city of Sanliurfa, located only 8 miles (13 kilometers) from Göbekli Tepe.

Göbekli Tepe was built a long time before the biblical stories of Eden were written down, but are the stories set in this location because it was already thought to be holy ground?

If the Sumerian stories about Enki, Enlil, and the Anunnaki were based on characters that were in any way real, however distorted they may have become over time or on forces these characters personified, was this the place where it all began?

If the biblical stories about Adam, Eve, and the serpent were based on

some kind of historical fact, even if they were deliberate metaphors, did the essential reality take place here?

Is southeastern Anatolia the birthplace of our civilization?

Andrew Collins has written a scholarly but very engaging and accessible book on this very subject. *Göbekli Tepe: Genesis of the Gods* goes into minute detail about the origins of humanity. In it, he details his long search for, and discovery of, the place he considers to be the real Eden, the birthplace of our civilization. In his words:

> Adam and Eve, as our first parents, are merely metaphors for humanity as it existed before we woke up to our "nakedness." Before this time we had lived in a state of innocence and grace that was taken away from us, and ever since that time we have been made to suffer and toil, not only in body, but also in spirit. The eternal golden age of hunting and foraging, when people were free to experience life on their own terms, would appear to have been halted by a cataclysm, arguably the proposed comet impact of 10,900 BC, and this changed everything. From these ashes arose people who wanted to tell us that thinking for ourselves and making decisions based on our own vision of life were essentially wrong, immoral even, and that whenever we have such thoughts we should feel guilt and shame, exactly what happened to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden … the future would now be shaped in the wake of the Neolithic [agricultural] *revolution.*

Loss of innocence, indeed, and loss of a way of life have not been seen since. Can we ever regain what this lost civilization once experienced, or are we destined to "toil by the sweat of our brow" for the rest of our days, knowing that, in the end, we will never again return to Eden?

THE EDEN OF THE EDDA TEXTS

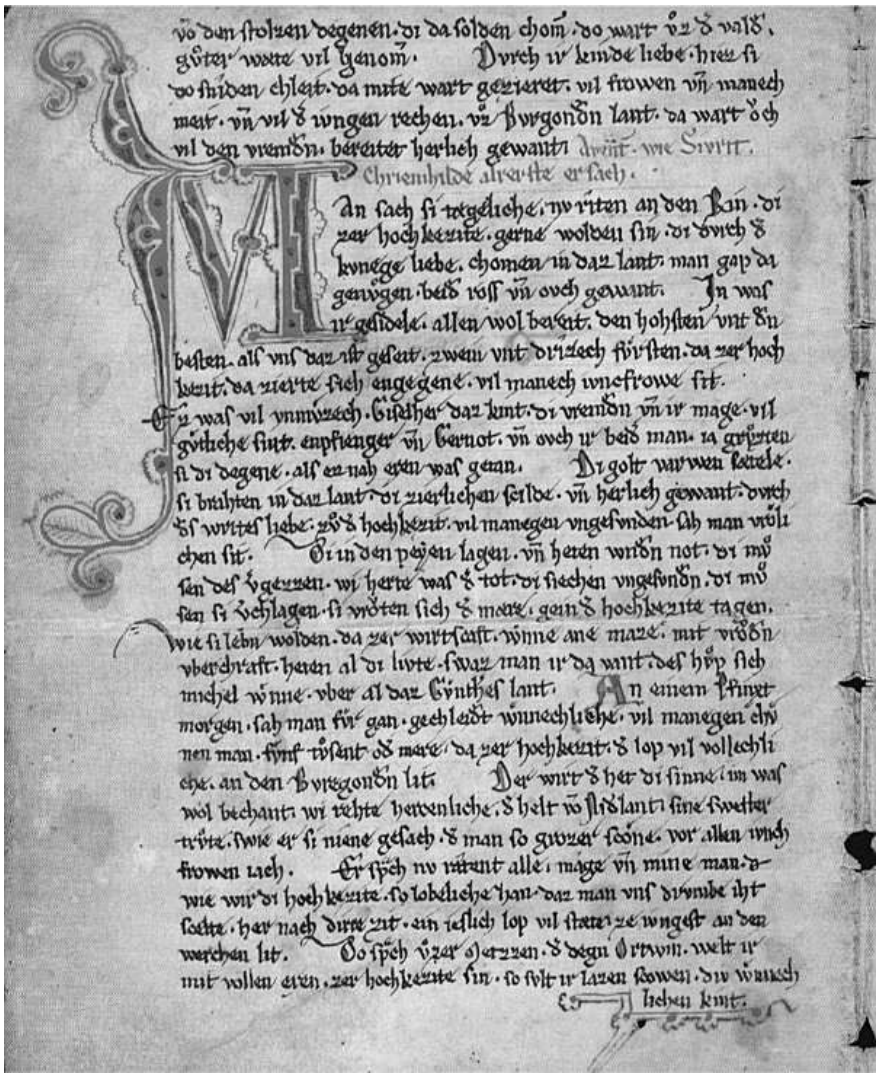
A thousand years ago, Vikings had come to Iceland. Although best known for their ferocity and piratical ways, they had a literary side as well. We know about them because of the Poetic Edda Texts and the Prose Edda Texts.

The Poetic Eddas tell us about ancient Norse pagan religious beliefs before Christianity made great inroads into their civilization. Between 1000

and 1300 C.E., Viking authors wrote vivid descriptions of a world that featured great heroes and villains, both men and women, gods, and highly skilled warriors and explorers who lived in what is now known as the Eddic Age.

These stories offer more than just a peek into history. They inspired Richard Wagner, who transformed the stories of *Das Niebelungenlied* into his magnificent, operatic Ring Cycle, but even if you aren't familiar with operatic repertoires, you have probably been influenced by them because it was the characters and landscape of the Poetic Eddas that inspired J. R. R. Tolkien when he wrote *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and *The Silmarillion*.

The Prose Eddas were written in about 1200 C.E. by the Icelandic poet Snorri Sturluson. It contains a lot of material that any skald, or poet, of his day would have needed to know if he was going to be considered any kind of a professional poet and singer.



A page from a sixeenth-century version of *Das Niebelungenlied,* the German epic inspired by the Eddas that, in turn, inspired the Ring Cycle operas of Richard Wagner.

Sturluson was a Christian, but that didn't stop him from reveling in his pagan heritage. He created an important background that helps modern readers better understand the Eden story of the ancient Norse. The difference is that the Prose Eddas are one of the first attempts to provide what we would call a rational, maybe even scientific, explanation for what had up until this time been considered fables and legends. It's similar to a scientist reading the Genesis account of Eden and attempting to reconcile it with historical fact. Even more, Sturluson quotes texts that are now lost, so they open up even more revelations to modern scholars.

With that in mind, we can now turn to the Eddas to reconstruct the origin story of the ancient Norse civilization. I've tried to reconcile a number

of translations and accounts and edited them for length. If the Norse had an Eden story, it would go something like this:

> In the beginning was Muspell. It was a land of both light and heat, and its flames were so hot that no one not born in that land could have survived. At the border stood Surt, holding a large, flaming sword. He awaited the end of the world, when he would eventually vanquish all the gods and cleanse the land with fire.
>
> Beyond the borders of Muspell lay the void. Its name was Ginnungagap. Beyond that was the cold, dark land called Niflheim. That land was marked by ice and frost. A heavy, cold rain fell constantly, creating fog and ice when the cold of Niflheim met the heat from Muspell. Where the cold met the heat, great, thawing drops would form. They eventually grew into the frost giant named Ymir. When he slept, he would fall into a drenching sweat. Under his left arm then grew a man and a woman, and likewise from his legs. It came to pass that one of his legs begot a son with the other. These were the first frost ogres.
>
> The thawing frost also begat a cow whose name was Audhumla. Four rivers of milk ran from her udders. Thus, she provided nourishment for Ymir. The cow licked salty ice blocks, and one day, her licking revealed a man's hair protruding from the ice. After two more days of licking, his head was revealed. Thus, on the third day, a tall, handsome, strong, young man was freed from the ice. His name was Buri.
>
> In time, Buri begat a son named Bor. Bor, in turn, married Bestla, who was the daughter of a giant.
>
> Bor and Bestla soon produced three sons. Their names were Odin, who was the eldest, Vili, and Vé. Odin, along with his brothers, became the greatest of men and soon ruled all of heaven and Earth. In time, they killed the giant Ymir. When he fell, great drops of blood flowed from his wounds, eventually forming a mighty river that drowned all the frost ogres but one. The giant Bergelmir alone escaped with his wife by climbing onto a lur, or hollowed-out tree trunk. Thus, the families of frost ogres were preserved.
>
> Odin, Vili, and Vé carried the body of Ymir to the middle of the land of Ginnungagap. His blood formed the sea and lakes. From his

flesh, they made Earth. His hair was turned into trees, and his bones were transformed into mountains. His broken teeth and jaws became rocks and pebbles.

When maggots were born in Ymir's flesh, they were given humanlike intelligence and understanding. They lived deep within Earth and in caves and became the race of dwarves.

From Ymir's skull, the sons of Bor brought forth the sky and set it as a four-sided canopy over Earth. At the east, west, north, and south, they placed a dwarf to guard the corners of the sky. Then, they threw Ymir's brain high into the air, and it became the clouds. Gathering sparks and fiery embers blown out of Muspell, they placed them over the sky to serve as lights below. They appointed these lights as paths to travel through the heavens.

At that time, Earth was surrounded by a deep and vast ocean. The sons of Bor presented the shores of this ocean to the families of giants to sue for their settlements and homes, but to protect themselves from the giants, the brothers built a great fortress using Ymir's eyebrows. This fortress they named Midgard.

One day, the sons of Bor were walking together along the shores of the sea. They came across two trees. From these were formed the first man and the first woman. To this pair, the gods gave gifts:

Odin gave them spirit and life.

Vili gave them power and movement.
Vé gave them clothing and names.

The man was named Ash. The woman's name was Embla. From these two have sprung the races of men descended from the land of Midgard.

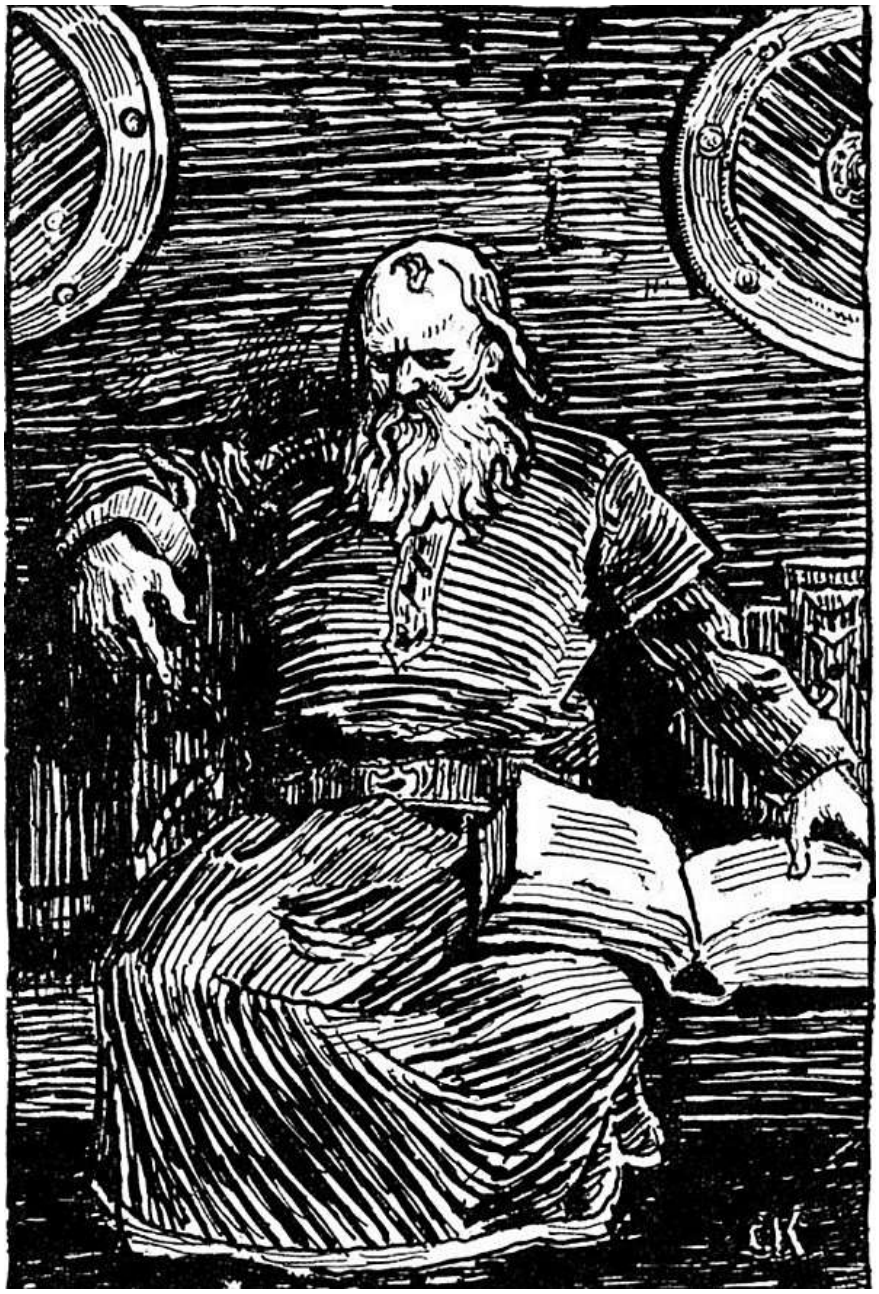
Thus, it was that the sons of Bor, now that they had populated the world of Midgard, built another stronghold for themselves. This they named Asgard. The gods and their kindred lived there for a long time, and many memorable events occurred that have been recorded in the sacred texts. Their great hall they named Hlidskjálf. Odin himself presided, seated on a great, high throne. From there, he could look out over the world they had created and see what everyone was doing. He came to understand everything he saw.

Odin married Frigg, who was the daughter of Fjörgvin. From this union came the Øsir, divine beings who inhabited Asgard. For this reason, Odin is called the All-Father.

From this union came their first son, whose name was Thor. Thor dominated every living creature by means of his might and dominion.

Informed people know that the gods built a great bridge between Earth and heaven. They called it Bifröst. Some say it appears as a rainbow. Although it is very strong, it will someday break when the sons of Muspell ride forth to cross it. Bifröst may be a good bridge, but even its strength will not prove sufficient when the sons of Muspell ride forth on the warpath.

From Earth rises the great ash tree Yggdrasil. This is the chief sanctuary of the gods. Its branches rise up to cover the whole Earth, and the gods conduct their councils in its shade.



An Icelandic poet, historian, and politician, Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241) specialized in Scandinavian history and wrote the Prose Edda.

Obviously, the fact that Snorri Sturluson was a Christian may have influenced some of his stories. A great deal of carryover occurs from the Genesis story, but once again, we are confronted by familiar themes of a previous civilization transforming into a successor. We find the now common reference to an ancient age of ice and a subsequent flood. We even find a strange reference to "the cold, dark land called Niflheim." Niflheim sounds a lot like the word *Nephilim*, which, as we have seen in both the Genesis and

Sumerian Eden stories, referred to giants.

What was it with the ancients and their fixation with giants? In these stories, could we be reading a mythological account of real history? Could "giants in the land in those days" have indeed existed, as we read in Genesis? Are the legends of giant remains discovered all around the world to be trusted? Might Bigfoot, Sasquatch, the Swamp Beast, and other such stories have a basis in fact?

It's a thought that certainly deserves our consideration.

The Hopi Eden Story

A common, recurring theme found throughout worldwide mythology is the idea that this civilization, even this world, is not the first. The world we see and the world we experience was not the first. Others paved the way. We are built on the ruins of previous civilizations and worlds.

Perhaps the best example we could turn to that illustrates this principle is the Eden story of the Hopi people of the American West. This ancient story is well known and extremely revealing if read historically as well as mythologically.

It again features ice and snow, floods and destruction, lost civilizations and new beginnings. In this sense, it embodies almost every basic theme we have explored so far. Here is an edited version following the account of Frank Waters in his *Book of the Hopi*. Once again, this is considered public domain scripture, so we need to read it accordingly:

The First World: Tokpela

When the first people awakened to life they were instructed by Sotuknang and Spider Woman to respect both Taiowa, the Creator, and the land they were given for their home. Spider Woman had formed it for them and they were nurtured by its bounty. They discovered vibration centers spread throughout the earth that echoed in similar centers within their own bodies and sang in resonance with the music of the stars in the heavens. The purpose of these centers was to help keep the people in tune with the Creator as they followed his ways.

The people forgot to listen. Ignoring the music of the stars that rang in their hearts, they no longer followed the Way and began to quarrel amongst

themselves. It got to be so bad that Sotuknang decided he must destroy the people before they ruined everything they had been given.

The world we see and the world we experience was not the first. Others paved the way. We are built on the ruins of previous civilizations and worlds.

But some of the old ones still remembered how to act correctly and show proper respect, so Sotuknang appeared to them with the sound of a mighty wind and said he would lead them to safety if they followed him and obeyed his instructions. And so it was that a few of the ancient ones took refuge among the Ant People as the First World was destroyed by fire. Sotuknang caused the earth to bellow forth smoke and flame. Volcanoes erupted from deep below the surface of the land. A Second World was then prepared for the people.

The Second World: Tokpa

The Second World was almost as beautiful as the first, but in this world the animals no longer trusted humans. They kept themselves separate and ran away whenever the people came upon them. Still, it was a good place to live. It was so good, in fact, that the people once again began to think they knew more than the Creator and ignored his plan for them. Life was too easy. They had everything they needed but they wanted more. They thought they could live any way they chose, even if it was disrespectful and selfish, and it soon became apparent that Sotuknang would have to destroy them again.

Once again, Sotuknang called on the Ant People to open their kivas to those who remembered, to those who still sang the songs of Taiowa. He led them again to safety in the underground world.

This time, Poqanghoya and Palongawhoya, the Twins who guarded the poles of the earth, left their posts and the world spun off its axis and went out of control, whirling through space. It soon became covered with ice and was frozen until the Twins once again took up their stations and restored life to the earth. The ice melted and the people could once again return to their new

home. This was the home the wise ones called Kuskurza, the Third World.

The Third World: Kuskurza

In this third world the people quickly multiplied. They created cities and countries—a whole new civilization. Sotuknang and Spider Woman despaired. The people could not sing the praises of Taiowa, the Creator, when they were too busy being occupied by their earthly plans and selfish dreams.

Some, of course, remembered the old ways. They knew that the further people traveled on the Road of Life, the harder it was to remain faithful and true. They tried to teach the young people the old ways, but the young people refused to listen. Instead, they found new ways to destroy and conquer. They sought to enhance their personal power at the expense of others. Some even invented flying shields, capable of carrying them to villages far away, where they could attack, pillage, and return so quickly that no one knew where they had gone.

Hopi petroglyphs in Mesa Verde showing symbols of their origin stories. The spiral symbol in the middle is probably a sipapu, a hole in the earth from which the Hopi emerged into the world.

Sotuknang knew he could not allow this way of life to continue. So he

warned Spider Woman that he would again destroy the people, this time with a great flood.

Spider Woman knew of the few people who still listened—who still tried to teach the people the ways of the Creator. But this time she didn't know how to save them. In a great flood, even the home of the Ant People would be destroyed. The people searched long and hard for a solution, for a way of salvation. Finally they hid themselves inside the hollow stems of bamboo trees while their world was drowned.

The Fourth World: Tuwaqachi

When the flood waters calmed, the people came out and began again. They made what seemed an endless journey by boat, paddling uphill all the way. But the earth was covered with water. From time to time they would send out birds to scout for a place of safety, but the birds always returned. Finally they began to find land. Islands appeared, like stepping stones, and they offered good places to live. But each time Spider Woman told them they must move on. The places they stopped were too easy, she said. They would soon fall again into their evil ways.

Finally the people were too exhausted to continue on their own. All they could do was open the doors of their hearts and allow Spider Woman to guide them. They were forced to submit to her wisdom.

At long last they came to a sandy shore where they were greeted by Sotuknang, who gave them instructions. They were to separate into different groups, each group following its own star by night and pillar of cloud by day, until they came to a place where the earth met the sea. Each group would keep track of their migration on a tablet of stone, and record in symbol the representation of their journeys. At long last they would be brought together again, but only after much travail. In this way they would finally come to remember what they had forgotten—to obey Taiowa, the Creator, and live according to his plan for them.

Hear the words of Sotuknang, spoken at the beginning of the fourth world:

"I have washed away even the footprints of your Emergence; the stepping-stones which I left for you. Down on the bottom of the seas lie all the proud cities, the flying shields and the worldly treasures corrupted with

evil, and those people who found no time to sing praises to the Creator from the tops of their hills. But the day will come, if you preserve the memory and the meaning of your Emergence, when these stepping-stones will emerge again to prove the truth you speak."

Even a superficial reading of this story causes eyebrows to raise. It has it all, including the "flying shields" we will cover in the chapter called "First in Flight." Put together with current geological descriptions of Ice Ages, floods, fiery comets, and narrow escapes, it offers great insight into the idea that ancient peoples seem to have a good grasp on what we now call geological ages. Unless they had an active oral tradition that passed down the stories of real events that were experienced by their ancestors, how could they possibly have known about these things? If one or even two past civilizations had recorded these things, we could presume that coincidence was at work, but over and over again, we find the same recurring themes and stories.

If one or even two past civilizations had recorded these things, we could presume that coincidence was at work, but over and over again, we find the same recurring themes and stories.

It seems obvious that more exists to our lost history than meets the eye. Maybe it's time to start taking voices from the past seriously.

The Eden of Theoretical Physics

It's easy to be intimidated by physicists. To rise to the top of their profession, they have to be very smart, but they also need to develop a very thick skin. Defending positions as highly technical as theirs against other entrenched, toprated physicists can sometimes be a brutal process. Anyone familiar with the tragic story of Hugh Everett, for instance, will know exactly what I'm talking about. After presenting the world with the many-worlds theory of quantum physics that is now, after Everett's tragic death at the age of fifty-one, accepted by many theoretical physicists, he was the target of so much scorn and verbal abuse that he retired from physics altogether. This rejection very probably led to his fatal heart attack, probably brought on by

his obesity, chain smoking, and excessive alcohol consumption, all of which were no doubt a reaction to treatment he received at the hands of his colleagues. If he had lived long enough to experience the near-reverence he now has been given in some fields of science, his life might have been totally different. Sad to say, the history of science, going all the way back to Isaac Newton, is littered with such stories.

That being said, and at the risk of offending some very smart people, I have to say that studying modern origin concepts is much like reading an up-to-date, revitalized mythology. Hindu creation stories sound very similar to new, mathematical renderings of the beginnings of the universe and life on Earth. Both require a certain amount of blind faith.

Imagine, for instance, a hypothetical conversation between a theoretical physicist—we'll call him Phil Physicist, or *PP*, for short—and a typical, well-read layperson named Joan Q. Public, or *JQP*.

JQP: What is the current origin/creation myth held by science today?

PP: Science doesn't deal in mythology. We allow only mathematics and observable data.

JQP: Then what does science say kicked everything off?

PP: In the beginning was a big bang.

JQP: What "banged"?

PP: We're not sure. We think that a random instability occurred in a fluctuating, cosmic vacuum, or *pre*-space.

JQP: When did it "bang"?

PP: We have an idea about "when" in terms of Earth years, but we can't say why it happened when it happened. It just did. It might have occurred as part of a great, cosmic roulette game in which an infinite number of randomly created universes happened and ours just happened to be one in which life could originate, or maybe, "our" big bang happened because an infinite number of previous universes collapsed, as ours will someday, and, in doing so, one of them sparked the "bang" that produced us.

JQP: If an infinite number of "bangs" produced an infinite number of previous universes, why is ours called "big"?

PP: Because our big bang produced us.

JQP: That leads me to ask, why did "our" big bang produce a universe so finely tuned as to produce a species such as ourselves who can contemplate such a thing?

PP: We don't know why. We don't even think about why. We leave that to the philosophers and (shudder) theologians and mystics. Some of us, maybe even most of us, don't think that "why" was even a consideration. It just happened, that's all.

JQP: You mean you don't think an intelligence is behind the whole thing?

PP: Heaven forbid!

JQP: Certainly, though, an initial big bang must have started the whole thing. What was the first cause that produced such an infinite effect?

PP: That's really not our department. When you talk about such things as "universal intelligence" or "cosmic consciousness," you start to sound like a religion or a mythology.

JQP: Well, what else can you talk about when you're talking about origin stories? In the end, it comes down to belief systems.

PP: We don't deal in belief systems. We allow only mathematics and observable data. They are the only things that will help us understand the mind of God.

The conversation continues. When talking to physicists, we are allowed to say that recurring "big bangs" are instabilities in the vacuum of the metaverse. They will talk to us about violent, surviving pairs of particles and antiparticles that populate the newborn universe's space/time. They will describe the process by which particles cohere into atoms and form mass when they pass through the newly discovered Higgs Field. They will concede that evolution took strange and wonderful paths on the way to produce us. They will drool over the interplay of gravitational energies and resultant forces that hold everything together.

They have never seen any of these processes at work, of course. No one was there when it all began. They are all constructs of complicated mathematics and observable data from the magnificent telescopes and

marvelous technologies available in today's laboratories.

However, they will not call their speculations a mythology—a way of explaining our origins—even though, in the end, that's exactly what they are.

In the end, they will have to accept the idea that origin theories are, in effect, faith statements. What we teach as science today is a mythology. It's a wonderful, complex, marvelous mythology that deserves our unwavering support, but it's a mythology just the same. It's an origin theory, just like every other mythology.

Scientists also have a creation story, which they have called the Big Bang Theory, but when you ask a physicist whether or not an intelligence of some sort was behind it all, most will not venture into such speculation.

Compare these two origin stories, for instance. The first is a modern, scientific rendition as seen in these excerpts taken from an address given by the late Stephen Hawking:

We have made tremendous progress in cosmology in the last hundred years. The General Theory of Relativity and the discovery of the

expansion of the universe shattered the old picture of an ever existing and everlasting universe.…

During this so called inflationary period, the marriage of the two theories predicted that small fluctuations would develop and lead to the formation of galaxies, stars, and all the other structure in the universe.

In Hindu mythology, the universe is created when Brahma opens his eyes after a lotus blossom emerges from Vishnu's naval. The cycle repeats each time Brahma closes and then reopens his eyes.

> Despite having had some great successes, not everything is solved. We do not yet have a good theoretical understanding of the observations that the expansion of the universe is accelerating again, after a long period of slowing down.
>
> We are getting close to answering the age old questions. Why are we here? Where did we come from?
>
> Now listen to these words from ancient India:
>
> Brahma meditates on the lotus blossom growing from the navel of Vishnu, who sleeps on the cosmic ocean made up of the remains of the last universe before this one. When Brahma opens his eyes to look around, a world comes into existence. One day in the life of Brahma is four billion, three hundred and twenty years, or one world cycle. Then he closes his eyes and the world disappears. When he opens them again, another cycle begins. All this goes on forever.

That sounds suspiciously like a poetic interpretation of Dr. Hawking's version of the latest origin theory. Variations on this theme have been told as long as people have been around to tell them. They form a collective mythology that changes with the times.

With this in mind, let's examine some of the scientific myths that now permeate the halls of academia. Remember that they are all variations on the original Eden myth, which was an attempt, based on cultural conditioning, to explain who we are and how we got here.

One at a time, here we go. Much of what follows is condensed from a PBS *NOVA* special reporting on Paul Halpern's *A Guide to Different Kinds of Parallel Universes.* You can read the original article at *www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova* from November 27, 2012:

The Anthropic Principle

This theory suggests that our universe is fine-tuned to produce the biologic life of which we are a part. Four major forces, called gravity, electromagnetic, strong, and weak, sustain life as we know it. If even one of these forces were minutely different, life would never have formed in the first place and the universe would never have come to be—yet it did. Why?

What if all the alternative possibilities occur in separate realities, but you aren't aware of them because you can only experience the one you happen to live in?

The answer sounds rather circular, but here it is anyway: The universe supports the evolution of humankind because if it didn't, humankind would never have evolved.

That's it. Things could have happened differently, and if they had, we wouldn't be here, but because we are here, that in itself is the proof that things happened the way they did.

In other words, our universe was structured to produce human life. Thus, the Anthropic Principle. *Anthropos* means "human being."

The biggest problem with this theory, as far as many scientists are concerned, is that it leaves open the question: "Structured by whom?"

Their answer is that although the universe *is* structured, it doesn't necessarily follow that it was *purposely* structured. It might have happened by accident.

Luckily for us, though, we're here. That means everything worked out just right.

Alternative Time Realities

Now we enter a realm that science fiction authors love to write about. If every act produces an observable effect, what happens to the effects we didn't choose? Does each choice open up the possibility for alternative effects? If we could go back in time, could we do something that would alter the life that surrounds us?

Scientists use the example of somehow returning to the past and accidentally killing your grandfather. If he dies, you might never have been born, but if you weren't born, how could you have gone back in time to kill your grandfather?

What if all the alternative possibilities occur in separate realities, but you aren't aware of them because you can only experience the one you happen to live in?

Before you shake your head in disgust because this kind of thinking can make you crazy, this theory is mathematically possible and very much a part of the Eden story, the origin story, of the theoretical physicist.

What makes it feasible is that according to Albert Einstein's space/time theories, it might be possible to travel back in time. The math indicates that we might not be able to go forward into the future, but backward travel is definitely a possibility. What this means, though, is even more mind-boggling. If we can go back in time, a future time traveler might be able to come and see us. That leaves open the idea of changing the reality we are currently enjoying, but, of course, we wouldn't be aware of it.

If thinking like this leaves you a little breathless, consider this: It is theoretically possible, given the fact that eternity has no end to it, that this has already happened an infinite number of times and will continue to happen until all possible alternative realities are lived out in time. In short, every possible universe that *could* ever be *will* be, given enough time.

That thought can drive you crazy if you let it.

Particle Paths through Space and Time

Richard Feynman was the one who released this theory onto an unsuspecting world. He tried to imagine a particle that traveled through space from one point to another. Theoretically, it could take an infinite number of different paths. Every path can be assigned a mathematical probability of being the one the particle will choose based on things like ease of travel, shortest distance between two points, and so on.

However, we have to remember that particles are also waves. Waves spread out as they move. Thus, the original particle "path" has now become what Feynman called a "probability amplitude."

As waves spread out, they take up more space and collide with one another. The collision tends to either cancel or amplify its adjacent wave depending on how they react with one another. If you project this conclusion outward, you'll eventually discover that only one pathway exists. That's the possibility we're living in.

In other words, this theory says that we live in a universe that exists only after all other possible universes previously existed. The path we're on is what we call reality, and we cannot experience anything else. All other paths

are outside our realm of possibility. We can deduce that they exist as very real possibilities, but we can never know for sure their nature or what would have happened had we traveled another path.

The late theoretical physicist Richard Feynman proposed that we live in a universe that came into existence after the existence of many other universes. This is very reminiscent of Hindu mythology.

Hugh Everett and the Many-Worlds Theory

We already briefly mentioned Hugh Everett. Here's his theory, which has gained a lot of professional respectability since he first suggested it back in 1951 or, as some insist, 1955, or others, 1957. We'll let Nick Herbert condense it for us in his book *Quantum Reality:*

> Of all the claims of the New Physics none is more outrageous than the contention that myriads of universes are created upon the occasion of each measurement act. For any situation in which several different outcomes are possible (flipping a coin, for instance) some physicists believe that all outcomes actually occur. In order to accommodate different outcomes without contradiction,

> entire new universes spring into being, identical in every detail except for the single outcome that gave them birth. In the case of a flipped coin, one universe contains a coin that came up heads; another, a coin showing tails. Science fiction writers commonly invent parallel universes for the sake of a story. Now quantum theory gives us good reason to take such stories seriously.

When Hugh Everett was twelve years old, he wrote a letter to Albert Einstein. Einstein actually responded. He was intrigued with Everett's possibilities as a thinker.

Niels Bohr, however, was a constant thorn in Einstein's side. He didn't want to accept the idea of quantum reality under any conditions, let alone the idea that an infinite number of worlds might exist. His opinion was a popular one back in those days, and he led the charge against anything and anyone who might adopt such preposterous theories.

As we said earlier, Everett became disgusted at the closed-mindedness of his colleagues and left physics altogether. He was a brilliant man and may have even saved the world during the years John Kennedy lived in the White House and went head-to-head with Fidel Castro during the Cuban Missile Crisis. While working at the Pentagon, Everett wrote the letter that became the impetus for the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction. Many people think that the doctrine secured a tenuous but effective peace during the Cold War.

Max Tegmark, a professor at MIT, says in his book *Our Mathematical Universe* that Everett's work is as important as Einstein's theory of relativity. If so, Everett was certainly a man ahead of his time. His ideas are now considered both important and influential.

Although the many-worlds theory sounds like a crazy idea, it is important because it solves the measurement problem. How can a conscious being actually have the power to change a universe simply by choosing one method of measurement over another?

How many such universes exist? Some have calculated the number to be somewhere near 10^{100}, but who's counting?

The answer is, he or she can't. The wave doesn't "collapse" into a single piece of cosmic "stuff." It collapses into every possible piece of cosmic "stuff." All possible outcomes occur. You don't realize it because you're stuck in one backwater universe and experience only one outcome, but if it's any consolation, the other versions of "you" exist in parallel dimensions. In one universe, you're standing there wondering why you made the choice you made, while in a parallel universe, your counterpart is standing there wondering why she made the choice she made. Both are unaware of the other, of course, and continue on as if nothing special has happened.

When a particle (a quantum) is measured (or observed), it can manifest in many different ways. Each manifestation is dependent on an observer or a measurement device. If we are the observer, we see one such random manifestation.

What about the others, though? What happened to them?

Everett's novel explanation is that they all occurred, but they manifested outside our sensory experience. In other words, other "yous" exist, which are each existing in your own space and each observing a different result. All possible "real" states are manifested but each in its own universe.

Suppose that, when measured, an electron has a 50 percent chance of rotating clockwise and a 50 percent chance of rotating counterclockwise. Which will occur when you check it out?

Only one. At least, you can handle only one, so you get a clockwise rotation, write it down in your book, and go home for the day.

What about the other possibility?

Everett says that another "you" got a counterclockwise spin, wrote it down in his book, and went home for the day.

Like lovers across a crowded room or ships that pass in the night, you both remain unaware of the other's existence. You live in parallel universes, separated, perhaps, by less than the width of an electron, but you are completely oblivious to your other, quantum self. Your two outcomes, caused by two measurements, both transpire but in different universes, and you never know it.

How many such universes exist? Some have calculated the number to be somewhere near 10^{100}, but who's counting?

We need to look at something else when it comes to the many-worlds theory, and it's very important. Our universe is finely tuned to create and support life. Many, many things have to be in balance. Too much gravity, too strong or too weak a nuclear field, too much of this, too little of that, and life could never have arisen.

Then why did it? How did it happen that the Goldilocks universe (not too hard—not too soft) that we call home turned out just right for us?

Religionists say it's because God made it that way. Others attribute it to dumb luck. Still others say it's the way it is because if it wasn't, we wouldn't be here to wonder about such things.

The plain truth is that if you leave it to mathematics, the chances are pretty low—almost nonexistent. According to statistics and probability studies, our existence is pretty near-impossible, but according to Everett, every possible thing that can happen does happen. That makes our existence a certainty.

When the Big Bang occurred, for whatever reason, individual "bubble" universes began to split off right away. They were right next to each other but followed totally separate evolutionary paths. Most of them, according to probability studies, couldn't develop life as we know it, but ours did. For that, we can be thankful. Then again, in those that didn't, no people are around to offer thanks anyway.

The Infinite Space Theory

The universe is really big. The particles that make it up are really small, but everything in the universe is made up of particles that have clumped together with only a finite number of ways they can join, so if you mix a finite number of particles together in an infinite space, some of the objects they form will look similar to one another. A huge space of light years might be between them, but they will still look similar.

Now take this idea to its logical conclusion.

Somewhere, out in the vastness of space, is a clumped-together bunch of chemicals and particles that looks almost like you. I know it's a long shot, but space is a really big, cosmic canvas, and the colors it has to play with are limited.

Therefore, somewhere out there is a nearly identical "you" who thinks

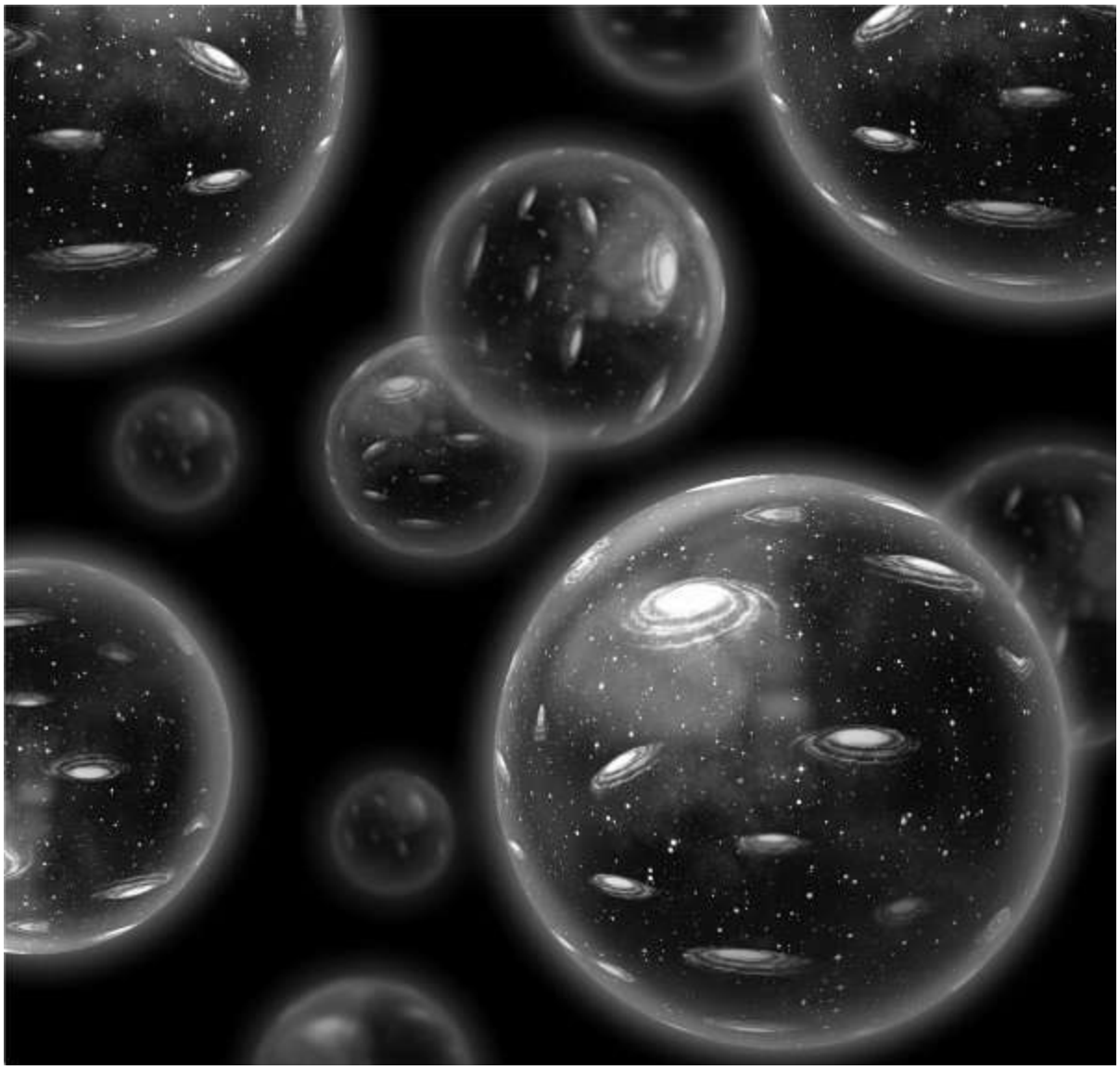
that he or she is unique and that “you” are simply a mathematician’s theory. Maybe they are even reading this book, which is only a little different from the one you are now holding.

If so, you’re not alone.

Soap Bubble Cosmology

I once sat in a hot tub on a cold, winter morning and had a vision of a cosmological Eden story. It was brought on by soap bubbles.

The best minds, or least the most prominent ones, in the field of cosmology these days have accepted the idea that the birth of the universe preceded the laws of physics by about 10^{-33} seconds. This follows the thinking of Alan Guth, Andrei Linde, and Paul Steinhardt, who all won the Dirac Prize for their concept of inflation. The idea had been around since the 1980s, but they described it in mathematical terms in 2002.



One possibility about the nature of reality is that our universe is one of many "soap bubble universes" that were created at the beginning of time.

It's a very difficult process to describe in detail, but the basic idea is that at the very beginning of the universe, right after the Big Bang, the universe expanded exponentially at a rate much faster than the speed of light. This period of expansion is called the Inflationary Epic, and it lasted for less than one second.

The universe is still expanding even as you read this, but not nearly that fast.

According to the Big Bang theory, the essential myth of the origin of the universe, "in the beginning," an infinitesimal point that became the universe,

a point/field of unimaginable energy that still existed only as potential, was somehow triggered by something, no one knows what, that caused space and time to grow, virtually instantaneously, into the material that built the universe we view today.

This brings us to my hot tub experience. If the Inflationary Epic took place in one part of what we call space, it must have also happened in other parts. In other words, bubbles formed. Each one became a potential universe. Ours is one of them but just one of many.

As I sat in my hot tub and watched bubbles form when I turned on the air jets, soap bubbles formed on the surface of the water. Some were big, and some were small. They merged, grew bigger, and eventually popped. Some were very big, and others were quite small. The big ones formed by absorbing adjacent bubbles. Some lasted a long time. Others popped right away.

I became aware of the fact that I had slipped away into a sort of trance metaphor. I was a god, sitting above and in a medium that produced individual universes, watching them disinterestedly as they formed and disappeared into the water of the hot tub. As they did so, they each produced their own form of interior life. If we had evolved in any one of those bubbles, we would have been unaware of the fact that adjacent bubbles were following their own evolutionary paths. They seemed to come and go rather quickly, but time meant nothing to me. I was a god watching the whole process while living within quite a different concept of time. It was quite thrilling, actually.

If the Inflationary Epic took place in one part of what we call space, it must have also happened in other parts. In other words, bubbles formed. Each one became a potential universe.

Think about it for a minute, though. If we live in a soap bubble universe that lives and dies over a process involving billions of years, that seems like an immensely long time to us, but what are a few billion years when it comes to eternity? Eternity isn’t just a long, long time. Eternity has nothing to do with time. How can we creatures of time possibly get our minds around a concept like that? It’s quite literally impossible for us. No wonder we create

smaller gods in our own image. It helps us through the long nights.

As I sat there in the hot tub, I decided to expand the metaphor a bit. I saw the bubbles—they were easy—but what about the water? What part did the medium in which these universe bubbles formed play in the whole picture?

It occurred to me that the water could serve as a metaphor for universal, or eternal, consciousness. If I lived in one of those bubbles and could develop a way to separate myself from the senses that were making it so difficult for me to contemplate eternity, I could actually perceive the bigger picture. I might even be able to converse, or at least conceive of, other evolved beings who lived in nearby bubbles.

I couldn't actually transport myself into them, of course, but I could at least develop some empathy, so if Consciousness (notice at this point that I switched to a capital "C") is the medium, the water that supports everything, including all the evolving, growing, and popping bubbles that floated on the surface, then Consciousness is the unifying reality of the Cosmos.

I had thought of a new way to express the word "God," but I could just as well have called it Akasha, or Reality, or Manitou, or Buddha Nature. Whatever I choose to call it, it expresses some sort of immense intelligence that is scientific and religious at the same time. It expresses an underlying Unity upon which an infinite number of universes float, expand, experience their time on the surface, and then pop away into oblivion.

This is not a new idea by any means. Ancient Hindu rishis, wise men, would have been very comfortable in my hot tub. A lot of scientists would have, too. A whole lot of people can fit into my hot tub. Maybe it even approaches the essential theoretical physicist's theory of the Eden myth. Minus the math, of course.

The Multiple Dimensions of String Theory

The next scientific Eden story is tough to grasp. It's only been around for a few years and is already fraying at the seams a bit. Physicists have been waiting for experimental evidence to show up, but so far it remains a mystery. The mathematical concepts work very well, but the proof is illusive.

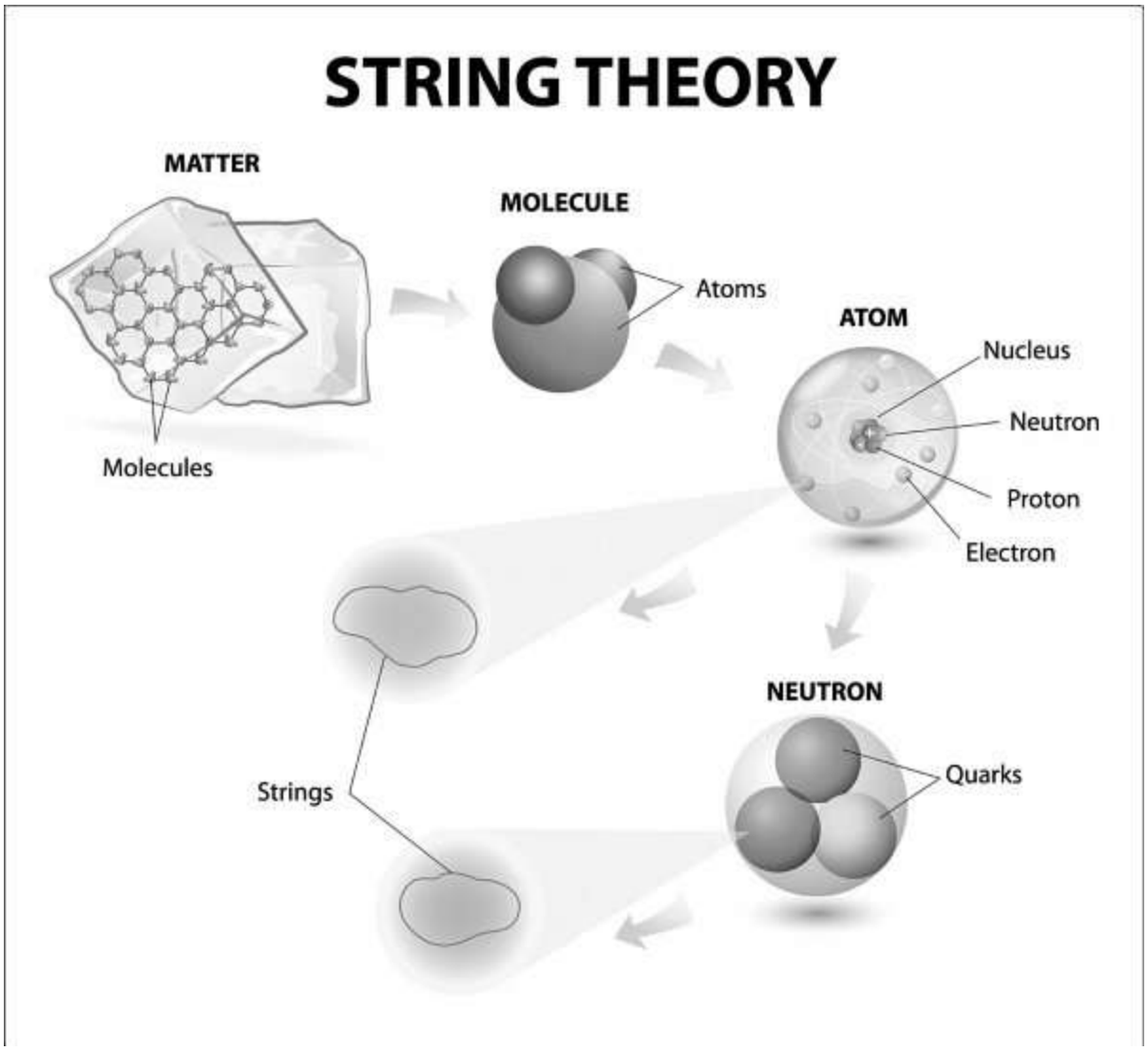
String theory arises from the need to unify the four forces that govern our universe—electromagnetic, strong, weak, and gravitational. Pulling

together the first three forces is relatively easy, at least as far as theoretical physics goes, but connecting gravity to the equation is hard. As a matter of fact, it's the principal goal for those who want to develop a GUT—that is, a grand unification theory. For a while, it looked as though string theory was going to be the elusive Holy Grail. Now scientists aren't quite so sure.

The basic principle of string theory is that down at the root level of everything in the material universe (that means on our side of the Higgs Field, the field that gives everything mass) lie vibrating, one-dimensional objects called strings.

I know, how can we even imagine an object that has only one dimension? Don't say I didn't warn you!

Strings interact with each other in very specific ways. On one hand, a string looks and acts much like a subatomic particle in that it has both mass and charge, but on the other, it's a totally different animal. When the string vibrates, it produces something called gravitational force. In that sense, string theory is a quantum theory of gravity. That's what makes it a candidate for the illusive theory of everything (TOE) that unites what we know about those four principal forces that hold everything together. It looked so good, as a matter of fact, that the theory soon evolved into an even bigger theory called superstring theory.



According to string theory, matter can ultimately be broken down at the tiniest level into incredibly small, one-dimensional, vibrating strings. Strings can act as particles and explain strong, weak, and electromagnetic forces, and when they vibrate they theoretically generate gravitational force. If this idea could be proven, it would be the basis for a Grand Unified Theory of everything.

However, for reasons understood only by a few very gifted theoretical physicists, superstring theory only works if you say each string exists in eleven different dimensions. Theoretical physicists live in a mental universe that can imagine such a thing, and as they continued on into the brave, new world they had postulated, they came to a concept of Eden that became known as M-theory. “M” stands for membrane, but some scientists prefer mystery, and others substitute magic. They’re just kidding around, though. I think.

At this point, it might be best for the rest of us to open a book called *Science for Dummies.* Andrew Zimmerman Jones and Daniel Robbins write about membrane theory in down-to-earth terms. In doing so, they bring us back to subjects we've already considered: soap bubble cosmology and the many-worlds theory:

> In string theory, the Multiverse is a theory in which our universe is not the only one; many universes *[called Membranes or 'Branes]* exist parallel to each other. These distinct universes within the Multiverse theory are called parallel universes. A variety of different theories lend themselves to a Multiverse viewpoint.
>
> In some theories, there are copies of you sitting right here right now reading this in other universes and other copies of you that are doing other things in other universes.
>
> Other theories contain parallel universes that are so radically different from our own that they follow entirely different fundamental laws of physics (or at least the same laws manifest in fundamentally different ways), likely collapsing or expanding so quickly that life never develops.

If such membranes, dimensions, parallel universes, or whatever we want to call them exist, the only way to experience them is through the mysteries of math or the fertile imagination of our minds. To those of us trapped in this version of the multiverse, or in this membrane, such a trip takes on the trappings of metaphysics. Thus, the Eden story of the theoretical physicist seems out of reach for most of us.

Stop and think about it for a minute, though. When you come right down to it, what we're talking about is different degrees of frequency. If other universes occupy the same space as us but simply vibrate at a faster frequency, might it be possible to someday expand our awareness to at least mentally become aware of them? Traditionally, that has been the position of the yogi, the mystic, and the shaman. Has science finally brought us to the edge of a landscape these gifted few have been traveling to for thousands of years? Was it the first glimpse, the awareness, of these dimensions that first made us human in the first place? In other words, were shamans and mystics the first theoretical physicists?

It's quite a thought, isn't it?

The Holographic Eden Story

We need to look at one more scientific Eden myth, and that one is called the Holographic Eden story. Here's the basic idea, although all of you *Star Trek* fans will be familiar with it.

According to this story, the whole universe is one big hologram. A hologram is a pattern in two dimensions that generates an image in three dimensions. In other words, all the information that constitutes our universe is stored on its periphery. Picture a swirling vortex with us on the inside. All the information that makes up the objects we see around us is not really here—it's out there—but it's projected in here, and we experience it in three dimensions.

According to this story, the whole universe is one big hologram. … In other words, all the information that constitutes our universe is stored on its periphery.

I know it's a far-out concept, but we owe it all to Stephen Hawking. When he was doing work on black holes, he came across a problem involving some immutable laws called the laws of thermodynamics. The second law of thermodynamics says that in a closed system such as our universe, disorder can never decrease. Where would it possibly go? It can't get out. All it can do is change into something else. That means that order can never increase. It's a closed system. What we've got is what we're stuck with. Forever.

What happens when matter collapses into a black hole? Where does it go? Into another universe? That implies that black holes are conduits to another closed system.

However, that can't be if the universe itself is a closed system. A closed system can't somehow swallow information and make it disappear, so how do we handle all this and remain faithful and true to accepted physical laws?

Hawking and his colleague Jacob Bekenstein worked out a solution. They decided that the disorder apparent in a black hole exists in direct proportion to its surface area. In other words, more room is inside the black hole for order and information than is on its surface. This gave Leonard

Susskind and Gerard ’t Hooft an opening, and they quickly took advantage of it. They came up with the idea that information inside a black hole isn’t lost, it’s stored holographically in two dimensions on the surface, but if you were to stand inside, you would experience that information in more than two dimensions.

Stay with me. We’re almost there.

In 1998, Juan Maldacena discovered that it’s easier to deal with string theory if you incorporate five dimensions. What that means is that we experience reality in three dimensions: that is, up, down, and sideways. Maldacena figured out that you could add a fourth dimension running perpendicular to these three. We wouldn’t directly experience it, but that wouldn’t mean it wasn’t there.

Therefore, if you assumed that the universe was a really big hologram consisting of a four-dimensional surface that produced a five-dimensional space inside, you could easily expand the concept to include a multidimensional surface producing a multidimensional space inside, providing all the room you would need to keep all the information of the universe safely contained.

This Eden story says, “In the beginning was a big bang. Ever since then, you get what you’ve got, and you’re stuck with it forever. It’s not going anywhere—but nothing you see is even close to the reality of it, so have another cup of coffee and take a nap.”

If you don’t get any of this, please don’t write to me. I don’t get it either, but it sure keeps theoretical physicists busy.

We’ve examined a whole host of scientific Eden myths. More exist, but we’ve covered many of them. Are any of them true? They are just as true as the myths that say, “In the beginning, God created.…”

However, the fact that serious scientists consider such things is enlightening. We live in a great mystery illuminated only by the flickering light of our imaginations. If any of these Eden stories prove viable on any meaningful level, our species still has a long journey to make to some unimaginable places.

I joke around sometimes when I consider some of these theories, but please don’t take them lightly. I often wonder what it would be like to live in the Middle Ages. No one back then knew that they were living in the

“middle” of something that was about to radically change the course of our entire species. They had no idea that the Renaissance was right around the corner. They could never have conceived of electricity and automobiles, let alone Mars Rovers and space flights.

We are no different. We live in exciting times. Hang on and enjoy the ride!

FIRST IN FLIGHT

On December 17, 1903, Wilbur and Orville Wright made four brief flights at Kitty Hawk with their first powered aircraft. The Wright brothers had invented the first successful airplane … or had they?

If one, or even many, lost, ancient civilizations existed on our planet, is it possible that they might have somehow perfected a technology of human flight or, at the very least, witnessed an off-world, alien presence that flew?

Humans have been intrigued by flying for a very long time. In Greek mythology, Daedalus and his son, Icarus, we are told, wanted to escape the island of Crete. Donning wings made of feathers and wax, they took off one fine morning and headed for the mainland. Icarus was so enamored with flight that, in the excitement of his newfound freedom, he made the mistake of flying too close to the Sun. The wax cementing the feathers to his wings melted, and he plunged to his death.

The moral of the story is that we really shouldn’t challenge the will of

the gods. If they had wanted us to fly, goes the lesson, they would have given us wings.

Some people just don't listen, though. A little more than a hundred years ago, the Wright brothers built a glider with a gas engine and became the first humans to intentionally and successfully fly. Nearly three-quarters of a century later, humans walked on the Moon. The age of flight had not only begun, it flourished very quickly.

Were Wilbur and Orville the first? The traditional story we have all been taught in school answers with an unequivocal "Yes!" Any ancient civilization would have been too primitive. In academia, that's where the argument stops. When asked to at least consider such a proposal, traditionalists have one, resounding demand. "Show me the evidence!" they exclaim.

In this chapter, that's exactly what we will do. Evidence abounds. Will it convince a closed-minded academic? Probably not, but any open-minded historian must consider even those facts that fly in the face of his or her prejudice.

Here are some facts. Judge for yourself.

THE SAQQARA BIRD

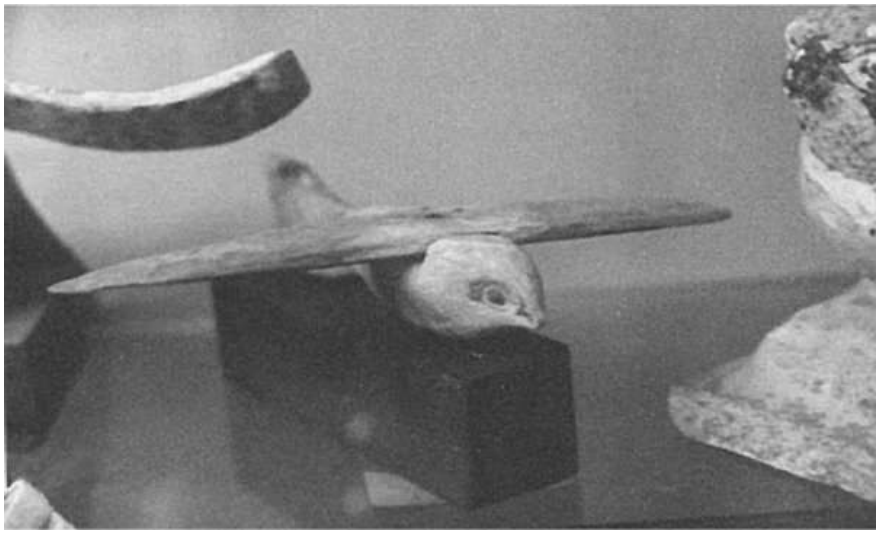
In 1898, near the Saqqara Pyramid, Egypt's oldest step pyramid, archaeologists discovered an artifact that still draws either praise or ridicule, depending on the predetermined mindset of the beholder.

It resembles a wooden bird and is estimated to be about 2,200 years old. For a long time, no one thought much about it. It was one of many carved birds discovered in the area, but Dr. Khalil Messiha, who unearthed the artifact, had a different idea. He suggested that ancient Egyptians might have developed a glider capable of flight.

When I first saw the model in the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities in Cairo, I must confess that I was taken aback. To me, it didn't look like a bird at all. My first impression was that it was a model glider, similar to the ones I used to make when I was a kid, even though it had what appeared to be the head and eyes of a bird. It could be that the inscription found on the artifact had something to do with it. Written in hieroglyphs was the phrase "the gift of Amon," and three papyruses found near the artifact contain the words, "I

want to fly." We don't know who "Amon" was, although the name could refer to the Egyptian god Amon Ra, but the impression is certainly that he knew something about flight. Thus, he must have been either an ancient astronaut or a very gifted early incarnation of the Wright brothers.

Scale-model wind tunnel tests on the Saqqara Bird have produced mixed results. Those who believe that it was an early flying machine like to cite the experiments conducted in 2006 by Simon Sanderson. He concluded that it was capable of gliding if it could only be launched somehow, perhaps by an elaborate catapult.



The artifact known as the Saqqara bird suggests that it might have been a model for an ancient glider.

Those who doubt that theory point to tests carried out in 2002 by Martin Gregorie. He concluded that the Saqqara Bird was nothing more than a toy.

The Egyptians were undoubtedly an advanced civilization with cultivated and sophisticated knowledge in architecture, construction techniques that still defy explanation, engineering, and art. Who is to say that they weren't capable of developing a technology of flight as well, or if they didn't actually develop the technology themselves, could they have been inspired by a civilization or perhaps visitors from an unknown place who had?

To this day, despite all sorts of arguments and theories, the question remains unanswered.

The Quimbaya (Tolima) Artifacts

Besides the Saqqara Bird, the other artifacts that are bound to incite Internet disdain are the Quimbaya, more often called the Tolima, artifacts. They are a set of gold figurines found in Colombia that, according to some estimates, date back as far as 1,700 years ago. Like the Saqqara Bird, they actually exist. They are on display at the Gold Museum in Bogotá, Colombia. Measuring approximately 2 to 3 inches (5–7.5 centimeters) in length, over one hundred of them exist. Archaeologists describe them as zoomorphic figurines representing birds, fish, insects, bats, and other mammals. Ancient alien theorists say that they are figurines depicting ancient flying machines complete with aerodynamic features, stabilizers, and a fuselage.

Debate has been so heated for so long that in 1994, German aeronautical engineers Peter Belting and Conrad Lubbers decided to test them out. They made a large-scale, radio-controlled model of one of the artifacts and took it for a test flight. It passed with flying colors, proving that the beautifully designed plane can fly with both simple, single-propeller power and jet power.

This prompted scorn from nonbelievers. One such "debunking" website offered a typical exposé:

> But honestly, let's look at the larger issue with this whole ancient airplane thing, Where are the remains of these planes? Where are the parts, the broken bits, the actual plane themselves? Where is all the stuff associated with flying planes? Where are the airports, the air towers, the luggage claim racks?
>
> —https://archyfantasies.com/2012/08/05/the-10-most-not-so-puzzling-ancient-artifacts-ancient-model-artifact-plus-a-rant

In other words, the author of this rant had nothing to bolster his argument except sarcasm, and that's a real problem when it comes to dealing with artifacts such as these. They are incredibly detailed, beautiful pieces of art. People who lived two thousand years ago had no business creating such things—so what are they?

Once again, rather than admitting that we have a real riddle on our hands and some ancient, lost secrets to solve, people assert positions based on predetermined prejudices. Rather than heighten the mystery, science is being done a disservice.

It’s very puzzling. A pre-Columbian civilization had the skill to construct figurines that, with very few changes, could actually achieve flight. The figurines themselves weren’t intended to fly, but they were obviously two-thousand-year-old copies of something that could. What had the ancient artists seen? It’s a mystery too fascinating to simply explain away with sarcasm. A simple explanation might exist, but if it does, no one seems to have come up with it yet.

Nazca Lines (Revisited)

We’ve already talked about the Nazca lines of Peru, but in the context of this chapter, which explores the possibilities of ancient, lost civilizations that might have either been capable of flight or at least witnessed it, it is appropriate to read again at least one earlier paragraph:

> Of von Däniken’s many observations, one that caught the attention of the world at large like no other are the Nazca lines of Peru that, until the invention of air travel, have been hiding in plain sight for thousands of years. Thirteen hundred lines form eight hundred figures in the shapes of animals, spiders, and geometric figures. Since they are only visible from above, what are they doing high in the mountains of Peru? Of all the explanations that have been put forth, the most likely still seems to be that they were put there to attract ancient aircraft, although the most recent academic theory involves the perpetual ancient need to propitiate the gods responsible for bringing water to Earth.

In 2014, another Nazca image suddenly came to the surface. Earlier, we talked about two distinct, ancient civilizations that were connected to the tradition of the lines. The Paracas tradition probably began the work before they disappeared from history. Their signature technique was to create what are called “positive” images. That is to say, they piled dark stones and gravel against the lighter-colored surface soil. After them came the Nazca tradition. Their creative style was just the opposite. They created a “negative” contrast by scraping away surface soil to reveal lighter soil underneath.

nce again, rather than admitting that we have a real riddle on our

O hands and some ancient, lost secrets to solve, people assert positions based on pre-determined prejudices.

Between the two traditions lies a span of time that no one quite understands, but now, that time span has been bridged. According to the May/June 2018 issue of *Archaeology* magazine, in 2014, Johny Isla, head of the Ministry of Culture in southern Peru, spotted an aerial photograph of the image of a human figure and a bird while he was visiting the German Archaeological Institute in Berlin. Isla is an expert on the Nazca lines, and he had never seen this photograph before. Intrigued, he looked more closely and discovered that the image was actually that of an orca and a fish taken back in 1974.

When he returned to Peru, he went in search of the image both in the field and on Google Earth. After a long search, he finally found it. Up until then, it had been completely overlooked and unregistered. It can only be seen from the air. Eventually, he was able to restore and date it. Apparently, the date of its construction falls right between the Paracas tradition and the Nazca tradition, which was about 2,200 years ago. The image contains examples of both the "positive" and "negative" techniques, so it seems to be a transition figure.

Isla believes it to be a ceremonial site, where people would gather to perform religious festivals of some kind, but this explanation begs the question: why is the image only visible from the air? What was going on overhead in the Peru of two thousand years ago?

Rukma Vimana Texts

So far, we've been looking at actual artifacts that can be viewed today in museums or the hills of Peru. Now we're going to turn to ancient texts that describe flying machines.

The first texts we'll examine come from India. As is often the case when dealing with ancient flying machines, we have to proceed very carefully. The field is full of false information. First of all, let's explain the texts we're working with.

Hinduism is based on a long and illustrious oral tradition. The oldest

written expressions of that tradition are found in the poems of the Vedas. They consist of four Samhitas, which are collections of hymns:

- Rig Veda, which is the oldest and probably the most revered.
- Sama Veda
- Yajur Veda
- Atharva Veda

They are considered to be about 3,500 years old. That date, however, refers to the time when they were first written down. The tradition in India was, and in some cases still is, that the texts lose their force when they are captured on paper. They are meant to be spoken aloud. The prodigious feats of memory performed by some Hindu holy men are amazing. The Vedas might very well have survived intact for millennia before finally being committed to parchment.

The Upanishads are usually called the Vedanta, a Sanskrit word that generally means either the "last chapters" of the Vedas or the "highest purpose" of the Vedas. They offer a philosophical commentary and best articulate the basic concept of Hinduism: *tat tvam asi*, or "thou art that."

This is the famous expression that says that our innermost being ("Thou"—Atman) is one with the inexpressible Absolute ("That"—Brahman).

A basic teaching contained in these works is that four great "world ages" are repeated over and over again throughout an unending history. These "ages" are called Yugas.

- Krita Yuga: This age is a Golden Age "in which abounds righteousness."
- Treta Yuga: This age witnesses a decline in morals in which "virtue fails."
- Davapara Yuga: "Lying and arguing expand, minds fall short, and truth declines."
- Kali Yuga: "Men turn to wickedness, and value is degraded. Decay flourishes, and the human race approaches annihilation."

The end of each Yuga comes about because of a catastrophe: either fire or flood. Then, the next Yuga arises, which is built on the remains of the preceding one.

According to the Bhagvata Purana, we are now living in the final days of the Kali Yuga, the last age. It is an age marked by progressively worse behavior:

> People will be greedy, take to wicked behavior, will be merciless, indulge in hostilities without any cause, unfortunate, extremely covetous for wealth and world desires.

The *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* are epic poems thought to be at least 2,400 years old. Scholars sometimes refer to them as the fifth Veda. They tell the story of the legendary Kurukshetra War and contain the famous work known as the Bhagavad Gita among others.

Those are the basic texts. The reason they are so important to us is that scattered throughout them all are stories about mysterious, ancient, flying machines. As we'll see in a moment, however, rumor has it that they may not be as ancient as once thought.

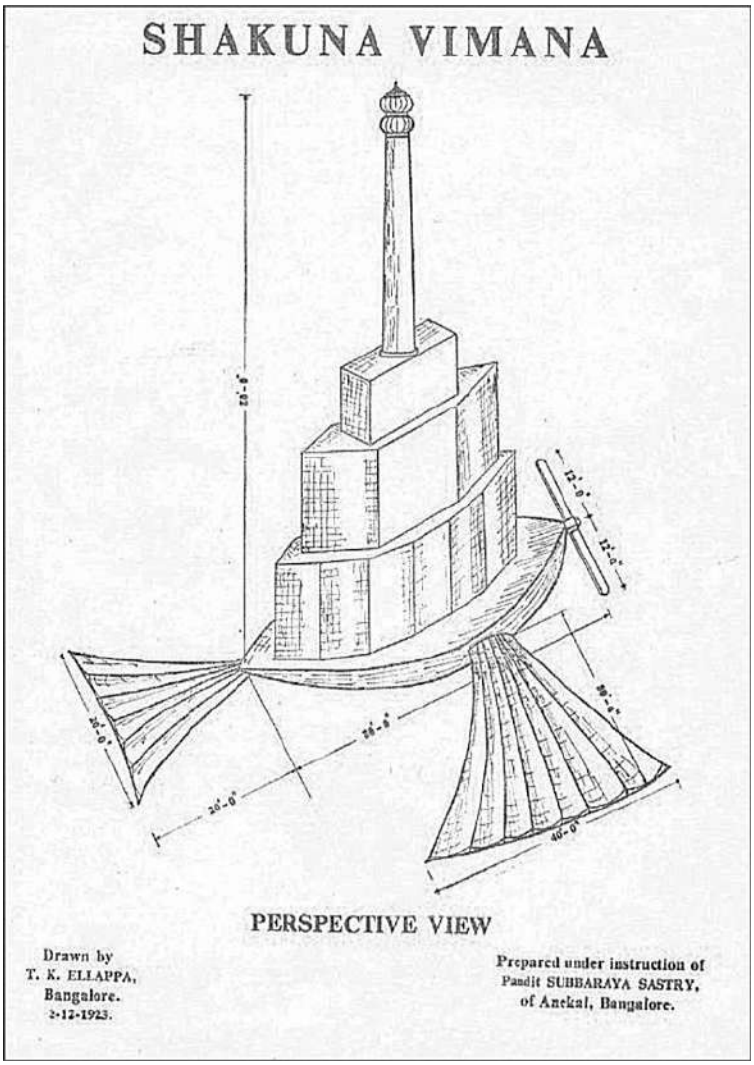
The demon Kali (shown here at far right trying to kill a sacred cow) is the source of all evil and lends his name to the era called Kali Yuga.

According to Dr. V. Raghavan, who before his retirement was head of the Sanskrit department of the University of Madras, these texts provide unequivocal proof that the ancient cultures of India were visited by alien races who fought wars, fired weapons that were interpreted by the ancients as being divine lightning, and, most importantly, used flying machines called Vimanas. The Ramayana describes them as being a "shining, wonderful

divine vehicle that sped through the air." The Mahabharata speaks of a "magnificent chariot that was as brilliant as the sun and made a noise like the thunder of a storm."

Vimanas have traditionally been thought to be mythological in nature, but if that's the case, they are certainly specific myths. A total of thirty-one different parts of the Vimanas are described in detail. Sixteen different metals are listed, only three of which are recognized today. The Vimanas fought epic battles in the sky and "high atmosphere" over India and seemed to deploy weapons that are even more powerful and deadly than we can produce today. The Mahabharata mentions by name a "god" named Asura Maya and even gives the dimensions of his Vimana. It was twelve cubits in circumference and had four strong wheels. Its weapons were described in poetic metaphors such as "Indra's dart," which, when fired, produced a "shaft of light" from a "circular reflector" dish. When it focused on an enemy, the target was "consumed with its power." In one such aerial fight, the enemy apparently became invisible. In *Star Trek* terms, it was a "cloaked ship." Not to worry, though. Krishna fired a special weapon that "killed by seeking out sound." In the immortal words of Nichelle Nichols's *Star Trek* character, Uhuru, "That thing's got to have a tailpipe!"

Of all the stories, however, the most terrible weapon of all is the Gurkha, flying in his swift and powerful Vimana, used to level the "three cities of the Vrishnis and Andhakas." With a single charge of his "iron thunderbolt," he destroyed all three, and an "incandescent column of smoke and fire, as brilliant as ten thousand suns, rose in all its splendor."



A 1923 illustration of a Vimana, a flying maching that was armed with weapons that could level a city.

In earlier chapters, we looked at Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro, and Derinkuyu, speculating about the possibilities of warfare in the skies over their heads. Could this be a report of those battles? If they are simple, mythological records, they seem to include a lot of detail. The texts talk about victims who suffer symptoms such as hair and nails falling out. Besides that, they give actual, precise instructions about how to build a Vimana that will "vertically ascend, vertically descend, move slanting forward and backward," and enable a human being to "fly in the air." Using one of these machines allows "heavenly beings to come down to Earth."

The Hakatha laws of the Babylonians even warn that the "privilege of operating a flying machine is great" and that the knowledge of flight is

among the most ancient of our inheritances, a “gift from upon high,” given so that they may serve as a means of saving many lives.

With that as a background, we now come to the most unnerving stories about Vimanas. In 2012, the Internet exploded with what may or may not be a true story about discovering one in a cave in Afghanistan. Whether or not this incident really happened, no one seems to be able to either verify or disapprove, although, true to form, many offer “proof” one way or another that they swear settles the issue.

The story goes that eight American soldiers, while on a mission in the heart of the desert, discovered an actual Vimana. After reporting their find, they all disappeared into what had been called a “time well.” Subsequent press releases say that all eight were later found sleeping after a hard day’s work.

What caused all the stir, as if finding a real spaceship wasn’t enough, was that apparently a whole host of world leaders, including President Barack Obama of the United States, David Cameron of the U.K., Nicolas Sarközy of France, and Angela Merkel of Germany, all within one week of one another, made clandestine trips to Afghanistan for unknown reasons. To make matters even worse, the former owner of the machine was said to be none other than the ancient prophet Zoroaster (Zarathustra), the founder of Zoroastrianism. This was revealed by studying the hieroglyphics found on the Vimana.

Concerning the mysterious “time well” that some reporters, no doubt influenced by *Star Trek* episodes, began to call a “temporal loop,” this is said to be an embodiment of a theory first proposed by Albert Einstein called the unified field theory long rumored to be behind a teleportation experiment called the Philadelphia Experiment of 1943.

This story has “hoax,” “fake news,” and “Internet conspiracy theory” written all over it, but I have to be honest. I mention this not because I have been able to come up with any proof one way or another, but rather because it all sounds suspicious to me. In other words, I find myself approaching it with the same predetermined mindset that I often criticize in others. Maybe time will provide more information.

At any rate, Vimanas theoretically operate by an “antigravitational” system using the power of something called *laghima* (“absence of weight”), a kind of psychic power that enables certain adepts to actually levitate.

We could go on and on, and many websites do. I encourage you to check them out. You will either be intrigued or appalled, depending on your particular frame of mind.

What are we left with?

If these references from ancient Indian texts are simply mythological, they seem awfully precise and detailed. We can't seem to draw a lot of moral or ethical lessons from the sacred scriptures that include everything from what kind of diet a man needs when he undertakes an interplanetary voyage or what kind of clothes he must wear.

On the other hand, the whole idea seems to be pretty far-fetched, so we are either dealing with a giant conspiracy theory or a real revelation concerning a forgotten chapter of our past. In the end, we need to proceed with caution, but we probably should proceed. The stakes are simply too high not to.

Flying Carpets of the *Kebra Nagast*

There have long been rumored historic ties between Ethiopia and ancient Israel. Sheba was said to be an Ethiopian queen who traveled to Israel to view for herself the legendary King Solomon. The story is found in 1 Kings 10:1–13:

> When the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and his relationship to the LORD, she came to test Solomon with hard questions. Arriving at Jerusalem with a very great caravan—with camels carrying spices, large quantities of gold, and precious stones—she came to Solomon and talked with him about all that she had on her mind. Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was too hard for the king to explain to her. When the queen of Sheba saw all the wisdom of Solomon and the palace he had built, the food on his table, the seating of his officials, the attending servants in their robes, his cupbearers, and the burnt offerings he made at the temple of the LORD, she was overwhelmed.
>
> She said to the king, "The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true. But I did not believe these things until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half was told me; in wisdom and wealth you have far

> exceeded the report I heard. How happy your people must be! How happy your officials, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! Praise be to the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on the throne of Israel. Because of the LORD's eternal love for Israel, he has made you king to maintain justice and righteousness."
>
> And she gave the king 120 talents of gold, large quantities of spices, and precious stones. Never again were so many spices brought in as those the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.
>
> (Hiram's ships brought gold from Ophir; and from there they brought great cargoes of almug wood and precious stones. The king used the almug wood to make supports for the temple of the LORD and for the royal palace, and to make harps and lyres for the musicians. So much almug wood has never been imported or seen since that day.)
>
> King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all she desired and asked for, besides what he had given her out of his royal bounty. Then she left and returned with her retinue to her own country.

The affair, it is said, produced a son, Menelik, who later in his life traveled back to Israel to reunite with his father for a while. When he returned to Ethiopia, he either secreted away or was given the Ark of the Covenant to keep it safe and cement the family ties between the two nations. To this day, Ethiopia claims it has the Ark protected in a safe temple and guarded by priests.

The Book of Enoch was one text found in Ethiopia and eventually released to the world. Another text is called the *Kebra Nagast*. Translated into English by Sir Wallis Budge, it recorded the genealogy of Solomon's dynasty, so it is often called the *Book of Kings* or *The Glory of Kings*, but it also makes the claim that among the gifts Sheba gave to Solomon was something later generations labeled a flying carpet. In other words, it says that Solomon owned a flying machine. Allegedly, God had bestowed supernatural wisdom on Solomon. He could speak in the language of the birds, then thought to be the basis of all language. According to legend, he could even fly. Thus, he was called the "Lord of men, genii, and birds."

A nineteenth-century painting Giovanni De Min of the Queen of Sheba meeting King Solomon. The queen gave Solomon many gifts, including a "flying carpet." Could it have been an actual flying machine?

This was no ordinary carpet, like the one featured in *The Thousand and One Nights* and *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp*. This one was capable of transporting a crew of forty thousand men.

It's a strange story. Besides being a total anachronism, the "carpet" was said to be an outlandish 60 miles (96 kilometers) square and was made of green silk. That's a lot of silk! Also, it was fast. Solomon could supposedly breakfast in Damascus and be in Media in time for dinner. Tibetan legends even say that Solomon flew all the way to Tibet.

Solomon's carpet was more than a troop transport, though. A story from 2,200 years ago, the very same time the Nazca lines were being constructed in Peru, a Parthian king named Phraates II, while engaged in a battle with Antiochus VII, king of the Seleucids, "reigned down fire and lightning" from his flying carpet, which was kept in a secret location high up in the heights of the Zagros Mountains. After his great victory, he supposedly did a flyover above the heads of his triumphant army.

Legend has it that a fleet of flying carpets was kept in the famous Alexandrian Library in Egypt, but when the library was burned to the ground, supposedly by angry Christians bent on destroying any remnants of paganism, the last flying carpet disappeared from Earth. They haven't been seen since.

Of course, these stories are too fanciful to be accepted at face value, but, as is so often the case when dealing with mythology, we are almost forced to ask how they originated. Who thought this stuff up and why? Could it be that they are based on some kernel of historical fact that hides like a stone in the shoe of historians and refuses to go away? Are they just fanciful tales? If so, what do they signify? What possible lesson do they seek to impart, or are they just "flights" of imagination?

Alien Craft in Familiar Myth and Legend

What follows is an eyewitness report written after an encounter with entities who appeared to be piloting a craft of unknown origin and technology. The man who wrote this report lived more than 2,600 years ago. His name was Ezekiel.

> In my thirtieth year, in the fourth month on the fifth day, while I was among the exiles by the Kebar River, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.…
>
> I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north—an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The center of the fire looked like glowing metal, and in the fire was what looked like four living creatures. In appearance their form was human, but each of them had four faces and four wings. Their legs were straight; their feet were like those of a calf and gleamed like burnished bronze. Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. All four of them had faces and wings, and the wings of one touched the wings of another. Each one went straight ahead; they did not turn as they moved.
>
> Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had the face of a human being, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle. Such were their faces. They each had two wings spreading out

upward, each wing touching that of the creature on either side; and each had two other wings covering its body. Each one went straight ahead. Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, without turning as they went. The appearance of the living creatures was like burning coals of fire or like torches. Fire moved back and forth among the creatures; it was bright, and lightning flashed out of it. The creatures sped back and forth like flashes of lightning.

As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the ground beside each creature with its four faces. This was the appearance and structure of the wheels: They sparkled like topaz, and all four looked alike. Each appeared to be made like a wheel intersecting a wheel. As they moved, they would go in any one of the four directions the creatures faced; the wheels did not change direction as the creatures went. Their rims were high and awesome, and all four rims were full of eyes all around.

When the living creatures moved, the wheels beside them moved; and when the living creatures rose from the ground, the wheels also rose. Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, and the wheels would rise along with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. When the creatures moved, they also moved; when the creatures stood still, they also stood still; and when the creatures rose from the ground, the wheels rose along with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

Spread out above the heads of the living creatures was what looked something like a vault, sparkling like crystal, and awesome. Under the vault their wings were stretched out one toward the other, and each had two wings covering its body. When the creatures moved, I heard the sound of their wings, like the roar of rushing waters, like the voice of the Almighty, like the tumult of an army. When they stood still, they lowered their wings.

Then there came a voice from above the vault over their heads as they stood with lowered wings. Above the vault over their heads was what looked like a throne of lapis lazuli, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full

> of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him.
>
> This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking.
>
> He said to me, “Son of Man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you.”
>
> —Ezekiel, chapter 1; *New International Version*

When Erich von Däniken featured this passage in his best-selling book *Chariots of the Gods?* claiming that this text illustrated an example of early extraterrestrial contact interpreted as a religious experience, people thought it wouldn’t take a rocket scientist to prove him wrong. They were half right. As it turns out, it took a rocket scientist to prove him right.

A 1670 engraving showing the prophet Ezekiel’s vision, including a strange wheel device and a four-headed creature. This could be an example of a man with limited knowledge of technology attempting to describe an advanced spacecraft.

Joseph Blumrich is a rocket scientist. He was the chief of NASA’s systems layout branch of the program development office at Marshall Space Flight Center. Wanting to use his experience to prove von Däniken’s

hypothesis wrong, he made detailed, engineering-quality drawings using Ezekiel's description. Much to his surprise, when he finished his project, he discovered that he had drawn a very credible design of what he felt certain was an alien spacecraft. He published his work in March 1973 under the German title *Da tat sich der Himmel auf.* In the English translation, it was published with the title *Spaceships of Ezekiel*. His central premise was that Ezekiel had, indeed, encountered an alien spacecraft and misunderstood his experience. This is certainly understandable given that Ezekiel was a priest who served on the Jerusalem Temple staff sometime after 622 B.C.E.

In an online interview with Lars A. Fischinger conducted for *Prä-Astronautik* in 2000, Blumrich explained his conversion:

> *Interviewer:* Mr. Blumrich, when you wanted to examine the thesis of Mr. von Däniken regarding the writings of Ezekiel with your knowledge, when did you notice that the "vision" of Ezekiel seems to possess a material basis? Was there a kind of "key indicator" in the text, which encouraged you to further work?
>
> *Blumrich:* There was no "conclusive indicator." After initial reluctance, what caused me to examine the Bible text more closely regarding von Däniken's claims was verse seven of the first chapter, with the description of the legs of those living beings, which came down from the sky, because that was an appropriate description of landing aids, which, years earlier, I myself had designed with my people for a lunar excursion module. That changed my complete rejection and I began to read the Ezekiel text slowly and carefully, in order, so to speak, to give this von Däniken, who I had never heard of, at least a chance. The more I read the Bible text, the more I found descriptions of a technical nature that I was familiar with from my own professional experience. After extensive work, this fact, in combination with the computations that finally had become possible, changed my assumption.

Blumrich's analysis was developed further by a man named Hans Herbert Beier. Reading the rest of the book of Ezekiel, he began to wonder why chapters 40 through 43 were ever considered to be of sufficient religious value to include them in the Bible. In these chapters, Ezekiel is taken to an immense temple, separated from our reality by time and space, and told to

measure the dimensions:

> In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the fall of the city—on that very day the hand of the LORD was on me and he took me there. In visions of God he took me to the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain, on whose south side were some buildings that looked like a city. He took me there, and I saw a man whose appearance was like bronze; he was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a measuring rod in his hand. The man said to me, “Son of man, look carefully and listen closely and pay attention to everything I am going to show you, for that is why you have been brought here. Tell the people of Israel everything you see.”
>
> I saw a wall completely surrounding the temple area. The length of the measuring rod in the man’s hand was six long cubits, each of which was a cubit and a handbreadth. He measured the wall; it was one measuring rod thick and one rod high.
>
> Then he went to the east gate. He climbed its steps and measured the threshold of the gate; it was one rod deep. The alcoves for the guards were one rod long and one rod wide, and the projecting walls between the alcoves were five cubits thick. And the threshold of the gate next to the portico facing the temple was one rod deep.
>
> Then he measured the portico of the gateway; it was eight cubits deep and its jambs were two cubits thick. The portico of the gateway faced the temple.

On and on it goes for three chapters. Why was this passage so important that it became a part of the Bible? Many other works were rejected when it came time to assemble the Scriptures we know today. How did this one make the cut? Scholars have put forth all sorts of theological explanations, but the truth is that no one really knows. For some reason, it must have seemed important to the original committee, but no answer was really satisfying to Hans Beier, so he decided to plot and graph the whole temple construct using the measurements given in Ezekiel.

The length of a cubit is usually thought to be the distance between your elbow and the tip of your longest finger. Because people come in different sizes, this makes estimations relative, but using his own proportions, Beier

made detailed drawings of what Ezekiel was told to measure.

His work, as far as I can determine, was never translated directly into English, so we have to trust those who report on it, but if they are correct, Blumrich's spaceship fits exactly inside Beier's temple, making it appear as if the "temple" was really a "hangar" for the spaceship.

This proves nothing, of course—the evidence is completely circumstantial—but given the coincidences and the fact that both passages in Ezekiel seem inconsistent with biblical religious teachings, it sure raises a few eyebrows.

Was Ezekiel really in contact with a civilization that was so "lost" that it wasn't even from this planet? Did our ancestors actually experience extraterrestrial visitations and mistake them for encounters with the gods?

Might a similar encounter happen again, perhaps in our own time and place?

Flying Shields of the American West

We don't have to travel to exotic locations in the Middle East in order to find examples of gods who punish sinful humankind with floods. We can find flying machines and technology used for warfare and destruction in the American Southwest.

Consider, for instance, this excerpt from the Hopi creation story. We take up the narration after a description of the first three of four "worlds" the Hopi people experienced in their distant past:

> In this third world the people quickly multiplied. They created cities and countries—a whole new civilization. Sotuknang and Spider Woman despaired. The people could not sing the praises of Taiowa, the Creator, when they were too busy being occupied by their earthly plans and selfish dreams.
>
> Some, of course, remembered the old ways. They knew that the further people traveled on the Road of Life, the harder it was to remain faithful and true. They tried to teach the young people the old ways, but the young people refused to listen. Instead, they found new ways to destroy and conquer. They sought to enhance their personal power at the expense of others. Some even invented

flying shields, capable of carrying them to villages far away, where they could attack, pillage, and return so quickly that no one knew where they had gone.

Sotuknang knew he could not allow this way of life to continue. So he warned Spider Woman that he would again destroy the people, this time with a great flood.…

Kachina dolls are part of the religious tradition of Pueblo tribes such as the Hopi and Zuni tribes. They represent spirits of the earth and cosmos, and some suggest this might include visitors from space. Indeed, some Kachina dolls seem to be wearing space helmets.

Hear the words of Sotuknang, spoken at the beginning of the fourth world:

“I have washed away even the footprints of your Emergence; the stepping-stones which I left for you. Down on the bottom of the seas lie all the proud cities, the flying shields and the worldly treasures corrupted with evil, and those people who found no time

to sing praises to the Creator from the tops of their hills. But the day will come, if you preserve the memory and the meaning of your Emergence, when these stepping-stones will emerge again to prove the truth you speak."

In this account, we find all the traditional bullet points of the worldwide Flood story.

- A population boom
- The construction of cities and towns forming a new civilization
- A turning away from traditional concepts of God
- A turning away from traditional values in favor of "worldly" passions and goods
- Old people despairing of the younger generation
- Out-of-control technology—in this case, even the invention of flying machines (shields)
- The gods send a deluge to destroy the old civilization
- A promise of a new beginning if people will heed the voice of God

The story is the same from the American Southwest to South America, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Israel, and the Genesis Flood. Only a few ways exist to approach what seems to be a universal story.

- The story might be hardwired into the human psyche. Somehow, we are psychologically disposed to call up such images to explain something buried deep in our subconscious. Carl Jung would say it is an archetype, part of the collective unconscious that is the representation of universal relationships. In this case, the deluge myth probably has something to do with our unconscious desire to erase a world gone wrong and start over again. We want to "wash it clean," so to speak, and begin again, the next time doing it right. Since humans have been the same for a long, long time, it is probably a universal desire repeated again and again through time.
- The deluge myth might be a tribal memory of an actual, historical event exaggerated through time whenever it is retold. Since local floods happen all the time and everywhere, the stories are

universal in scope.

- It's possible that one worldwide flood affected everybody on Earth at a particular time. In every tribe or civilization that existed at the time, the story is passed down through the generations, each version translated into a local vernacular and geography.

Any one of these explanations may be correct, but we have to remember that the devil is in the details. In this case, why "flying shields"? That's a pretty bizarre picture.

Of course, we have to allow for any and all explanations. It might be that some tribal elder, meditating on the failure of the younger generation, as all elders do, might have seen some Hopi kid pick up a buffalo-hide shield, sail it through the air like a Frisbee, and say to himself, "A flying shield! What a great idea for a lesson in morality and ethics!" It seems a bit far-fetched, but it could have happened that way.

We also have to allow for the fact that such an outlandish idea as a "flying shield" might be based on historical precedent. A lost, ancient civilization might have Maybe it was developed on Earth. Maybe it was an example of alien technology.

A lost, ancient civilization might have either developed or actually seen such a flying machine. Maybe it was developed on Earth. Maybe it was an example of alien technology.

At this point, it might prove helpful to revisit a paragraph or two that we wrote in an earlier chapter about Mesopotamia:

> Before we leave this theory hanging in our imaginations, it might prove informative to travel halfway around the world to the homeland of the Hopi Indians of the American Southwest. In Hopi mythology, their ancient ancestors were saved from a series of catastrophes that overcame their world. The ones who came to their aid were their friends, the Ant People, who gave them shelter and saw them through the worst of the destruction.

In Hopi, the word translated “ant” is *anu*. The root word for “friends” is *naki*. Thus, “ant friends” can be translated *anu-naki*, which sounds very much like the Sumerian Anunnaki. Is this just coincidence, or were the Anunnaki, the “heroes of old, the men of renown,” more widespread and important than we have been taught?

“Flying shields” were mentioned by a people who share both linguistic similarities and cultural images about flying machines with a much earlier civilization, even though they live half a world apart. At the very least, it seems to be a remarkable coincidence.

Of Flying Brooms and Angel Wings

Out of the Egyptian desert, in the shadows of the oldest step pyramid, in concert with the Saqqara Bird, echoes the plaintive cry, “I want to fly.”

Apparently, humans all want to fly. Before we got a vicarious thrill watching Quidditch matches that featured Harry Potter, mounted on his broomstick while flying high above the storm, many of us played at being Superman.

Even religious prophets seem to have fallen under the spell. “They shall mount up on wings as Eagles,” declared the prophet Isaiah. “Messengers of God” fly to us on angel’s wings.

We watched with universal bated breath when humans flew to the Moon.

We cheered for Charles Lindbergh when he became the first man to fly all the way across the Atlantic Ocean and mourned the loss of Amelia Earhart when she was lost at sea while trying to fly around the world.

Nowadays, we tend to take flying for granted, unless our flight is delayed and we miss a connection, but who among us hasn’t watched a hawk making lazy circles in the sky and not been just a little envious?

It is entirely possible that legends and myths about flying machines are a product of that desire and envy, but the varied accounts, coming from almost every ancient civilization around the world and expressing such unique and differing details, can’t help but make us pause and wonder.

Did our ancient ancestors develop a technology of flight that is now long

forgotten, buried beneath a devastating cataclysm that took not only their lost civilization but its secrets with it? Did Orville and Wilbur Wright reinvent rather than discover the miracle of flight? If they accomplished the feat, and their direct descendants used their invention to fly to the Moon only a century or so later, why couldn't the ancients have experienced the same rapid technological advances?

Alternatively, did our ancestors not *invent* flying machines but rather *observe* them, remembering their encounters with oral history that became first tribal stories, then legends, then myths? Did those myths eventually become the foundation of religious thought that evolved into tales of flying dragons, fairies, angels, and witches on broomsticks?

It would be easy to dismiss the myths of flying machines were it not for the actual artifacts that can be observed in museums today. The Saqqara Birds are real. The Quimbaya (Tolima) artifacts are real. If the conspiracy theorists are correct, maybe even Vimanas are real. The Nazca lines were constructed to be observed from the air. No explanations concerning "ceremonial centers" can alter that fact.

The evidence seems to be unequivocal. Our ancestors either invented the technology of flight or observed it at close hand. Something happened in the skies over planet Earth. We don't know exactly what it was, but pretending it never happened while sweeping the evidence, both actual and mythological, under the rug just because it doesn't fit our current, accepted, official story won't answer the question. For that, we need research. We won't find the answers if we refuse to look for the evidence.

LOST LANDS

ATLANTIS

In those days the Atlantic was navigable; and there was an island situated in front of the straits which are by you called the Pillars of Heracles; the island was the way to other islands, and from these you might pass to the whole of the opposite continent which surrounded the true ocean; for this sea which is within the Straits of Heracles is only a harbor, having a narrow entrance, but that other is a real sea, and the surrounding land may be most truly called a boundless continent. Now in this island of Atlantis there was a great and wonderful empire which had rule over the whole island and several others, and over parts of the continent as far as Egypt, and of Europe. This vast power shone forth in the excellence of her virtue and strength, among all mankind. She was pre-eminent in courage and military skill. But afterwards there occurred violent

> earthquakes and floods; and in a single day and night of misfortune all her warlike men in a body sank into the earth, and the island of Atlantis in like manner disappeared in the depths of the sea. For which reason the sea in those parts is impassable and impenetrable, because there is a shoal of mud in the way; and this was caused by the subsidence of the island.
>
> —Condensed version of Plato's account of Atlantis, as translated by Benjamin Jowett

Long before Walt Disney, long before Wonder Woman and Aquaman, there was Plato. He lived 2,400 years ago in ancient Greece, and besides being one of the most profound thinkers the world has ever known, besides being a philosopher and mathematician, besides being the professor who was taught by Socrates and, in turn, became a tutor to Aristotle, Plato wrote some of the most intriguing, argued-about, and debated paragraphs in the history of the world. I doubt he ever imagined how controversial his work would become.

Plato founded the Academy in Athens, the first great university of the Western world. His writing is part of the regular curriculum of universities everywhere and is considered to be foundational work essential to any modern degree in philosophy. Alfred North Whitehead once offered the now famous opinion that all of Western philosophy is "merely footnotes to Plato."

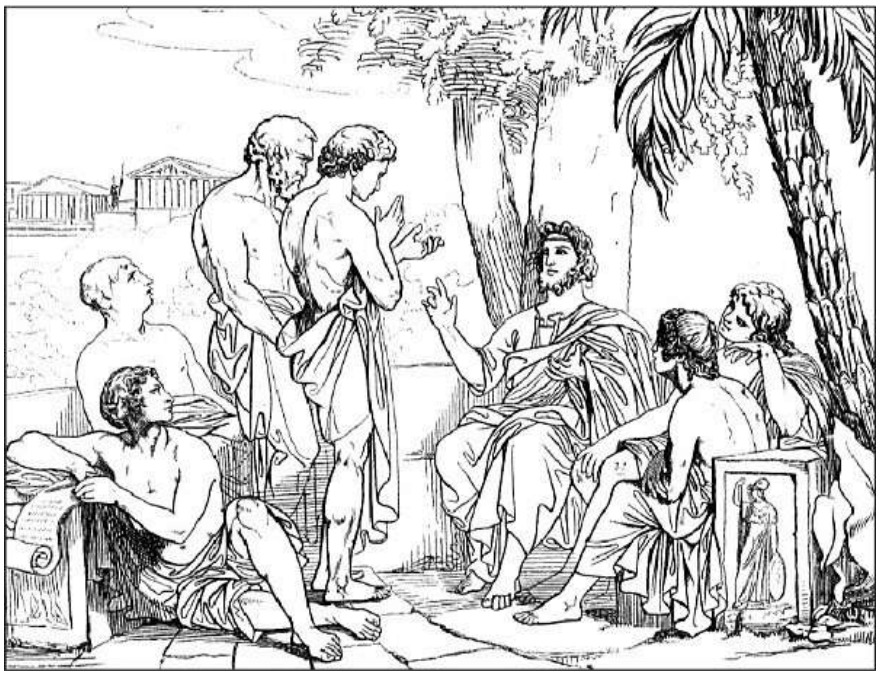
Augustine of Hippo, a major theologian whose work, long after his death, helped spark the Protestant Revolution, had such a respect for Plato that Friedrich Nietzsche called Christianity "Platonism for the people."

Plato's teaching method stemmed from discussions he called *Dialogues*. In these, he recorded a background plot device in which a teacher would engage a pupil in conversation. The teacher would begin by asking a pertinent question. Then, as the conversation continued, he would get the student to go further and further out on a limb until, through sheer weight of overwhelming logic, the limb broke. It wasn't fair, of course, but many college professors still utilize this technique in their classrooms.

Two of Plato's *Dialogues*, the *Timaeus* and the *Critias*, describe a long-lost, supposedly technologically sophisticated and seafaring civilization whose capital city existed on an island in the Atlantic Ocean outside the Pillars of Hercules, the modern-day Straits of Gibraltar. The island capital

was called Atlantis.

This civilization had the technological resources to conquer the world, but it developed, as human civilizations tend to do, hubris. Plato implied that in its arrogance, it developed technology it couldn't control. For this reason, it was destroyed "in a single terrible day and night," sinking into oblivion below the waves.



The Greek philosopher Plato is depicted in this 1879 illustration instructing his students. Plato's story about Atlantis was created as a teaching tool about morality, but many believe Atlantis was based on a real place.

Plato is careful to note that his information was passed down to him from Solon, who was a distant ancestor. Solon, it seems, had traveled to Egypt, where he was taught an oral history that had been passed down through generations of Egyptian priests for nine thousand years.

If Plato had never written anything else, this alone would have earned him immortality. People who never studied his *Dialogues*, who never learned to parse his deep and penetrating arguments, who know nothing about the fictional characters Timaeus and Critias, know about Atlantis.

Most likely, the vast majority of Plato scholars who teach philosophy today think that Plato invented Atlantis so he could use it as a plot device to make an allegorical point. They teach their students that the *Dialogues* were teaching parables, not history lessons. The *Dialogues* may be brilliant pieces

of fiction, and they deserve serious study for philosophical reasons, but Atlantis existed only in the mind of Plato, although in the *Dialogues*, he modestly gives the central role of teacher to his own former teacher, Socrates. Thus, it is, in the text at least, Socrates who engages in dialogue with students in order to prove a point. In other words, what we know about Atlantis comes from the lips of Socrates, but it is put there by Plato, the author.

Plato was using history, not imagination, to illustrate his central theme. Human hubris and arrogance lead to destruction.

Once again, however, we are faced with a case of too much information. If the *Dialogues* are only teaching tools, why are they filled with such an abundance of physical and even geographical details that are not needed? Plato gives us locations, dates, and times that clutter up the point he is trying to make, not enhance it. They draw our attention away from his message, not toward it. A good teacher wouldn't do this, and Plato is, obviously, a very good teacher.

Therefore, it might prove useful to start with a basic premise: Plato was using history, not imagination, to illustrate his central theme. Human hubris and arrogance lead to destruction. It has before. It will again. We need to learn from our past or we will find ourselves reliving it.

If we proceed from that assumption, what happens? If we bypass Plato's philosophical point and explore his context, where do we wind up?

With that in mind, let's see if Atlantis might be a real place that underwent a real tragedy. Let's take Plato at his word. Let's assume that he knew what he was talking about.

That being the case, we need to begin at the beginning. If Atlantis really existed, where was it?

Location, Location, Location

If Atlantis is a figment of the imagination, why does Plato give it such a specific location and describe it in so much detail? Far more information is here than is needed just to prove a literary point.

> In those days the Atlantic was navigable; and there was an island situated in front of the straits which are by you called the Pillars of Heracles; the island was the way to other islands, and from these you might pass to the whole of the opposite continent which surrounded the true ocean; for this sea which is within the Straits of Heracles is only a harbor, having a narrow entrance, but that other is a real sea, and the surrounding land may be most truly called a boundless continent.

A quick read of this situates Atlantis pretty well. Although some theories place it in the Mediterranean Sea in places such as Santorini, Thira, or even off the coast of Israel, they do this because geology indicates that all those places were once devastated by at least one massive flood.

Well, they probably were, but if we're going to take Plato seriously, we really can't say that he got everything right except the location. The sunken island of Santorini, for instance, shows evidence of a catastrophic disaster caused by an immense volcano exploding and producing a measurable tidal wave that destroyed the island very quickly. Even the shape fits Plato's description. However, Santorini is not in the Atlantic, and it is not the size of a continent.

Let's limit our search to the Atlantic, then, outside the Straits of Gibraltar or the "Pillars of Heracles," on the "way to other islands, and from these you might pass to the whole of the opposite continent."

That narrows us down to three choices.

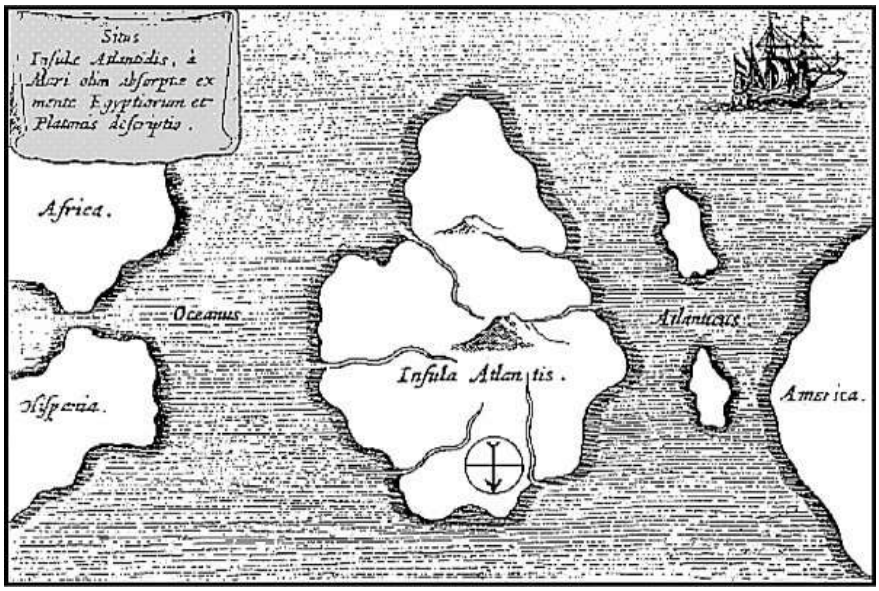
First, does a sunken continent exist offshore and opposite from the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea? Not really, but the Azores offer a possibility. They lie about 900 miles (1,500 kilometers) off the shore of Portugal. Because they are islands, the theory has been put forth that they may be the mountaintops of Atlantis. Archaeological work there has uncovered some ancient ruins, but the size and scope of the Azores don't really seem to fit the idea of a whole continent.

Therefore, let's move farther west to the Bahamas, a destination that is certainly "on the way to the whole of the opposite continent." That seems to be an accurate description of the Americas, which were thought to be unknown to the Greeks of his time. Plato describes a flourishing agricultural society, a high technology that seems to include some kind of central lighting system, a great fleet of ships involved in maritime trade and other activities,

and a superb construction technology that included the building of great temples and public buildings. He even throws in a description of elephants and other domesticated animals.

If Plato only intended Atlantis to be a teaching device, throwing in elephants seems to be too much information, but it is a known fact that in the time frame Plato gave, mastodons were common in the Americas.

Edgar Cayce, America's "Sleeping Prophet," thought this was the place. He predicted that it would rise again and even pinpointed the exact year. Atlantis didn't rise from the depths according to his prediction during his time frame, but that was the year the submerged Bimini Road was discovered. It seems as though it might have been built by humans, especially since clues have been found that the whole area was once above sea level and consisted of a single landmass. It seems to be a little too far west to fit Plato's description, but it's in the right direction. The submerged Bimini structure, if it is, indeed, a road leading to a harbor, appears to be constructed by humans.



A 1669 map by German Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher speculates that Atlantis was in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean (note that the map is drawn with South at the top and North at the bottom).

Does the Bimini Road lead to Atlantis?

Andrew Collins in his book *Atlantis in the Caribbean and the Comet That Changed the World* thinks that's part of the story. He puts forth some compelling evidence that Atlantis was located in the Bahamas and Caribbean and that Cuba may have been the capital of the island nation. It is his theory

that at the time of the Younger Dryas comet impact some twelve thousand years ago, the island of Cuba was devastated, and parts of the Bahaman landmass in the Caribbean were submerged beneath the rising sea. Relating ancient myths and legends from the indigenous people of North, Central, and South America, including the Maya of Mesoamerica, the Quiché of Peru, the Yuchi of Oklahoma, the islanders of the Antilles, and the native peoples of Brazil, he believes that the comet that destroyed Atlantis in the Caribbean also formed the numerous elliptical depressions called Carolina Bays. They are found across the Carolinas and all the way down the eastern Atlantic coast.

This explains Plato's "opposite continent." It is nothing less than America itself. If this is true, the Atlantis story was carried back to Egypt and the Mediterranean world by ancient sailors such as the Phoenicians and Carthaginians possibly three thousand years ago.

Collins doesn't stop there, either. If his theory holds up to scrutiny, it explains many of the mysteries we have already covered in this book such as evidence found in Egyptian mummies that could only have come from the Americas and African features found on the giant stone heads in Mexico. Atlantis was said to be a seafaring, trading nation. They might be responsible for these items being dispersed around the world.

It's a comprehensive theory that deserves more attention.

Many people, however, wonder if yet another explanation exists.

Earlier, we talked about maps that show the continent of Antarctica free of ice. If Antarctica was always situated where it is today, that wouldn't be possible—but what if Antarctica was once located farther north, in the Atlantic?

In his book *Fingerprints of the Gods*, Graham Hancock puts forth a pretty convincing argument that plate tectonics were involved in the destruction of Atlantis. In our earlier study of Antarctica, we followed breadcrumb clues left behind by Charles Hapgood of Keene State University who, in his books *Maps of the Ancient Sea Kings: Evidence of Advanced Civilization in the Ice Age* and *The Path of the Pole*, researched ancient maps containing drawings of a continent that was amazingly similar to Antarctica. Traditional theory says that as long as humans have been on Earth, Antarctica has been hidden beneath great ice sheets, so how could ancient cartographers have ever seen the shoreline in order to describe and map it so accurately?

Hancock believes that Antarctica might have been in a more northerly latitude before the Younger Dryas comet impact of 11,600 years ago.

Hancock theorized that Antarctica might have been in a more northerly latitude before the Younger Dryas comet impact of 11,600 years ago. His theory presupposes two hits from the same comet debris stream, one at the beginning of the Younger Dryas 12,800 years ago and the second 11,600 years ago. One began the mini Ice Age, and the other ended it. If the second impact was violent enough, and it certainly seems to have been, it could have instigated some massive shifts of the plates that support Earth's continents. This could have pushed what was once a semitropical Antarctica suddenly into a southern polar location, instituting a sudden freeze.

As southerly locations to the west rode the wave farther north, the shift would have produced opposite effects. Globally, it would have for all intents and purposes destroyed megafauna such as mammoths. It would explain why many of them were found frozen in what are now northern latitudes. One day, the beast would have been dining on plants and flowers in a relatively balmy land. The next day, it would be frozen solid, the contents of his last dinner still in its stomach. This is exactly what archaeologists have discovered thousands of years later.

This theory explains some fascinating phenomena. Most oceanographers and geologists don't accept it, but Albert Einstein was quite interested when he first read the theory as it was put forth by Professor Hapgood. Another person who jumped on this idea was Clive Cussler. He made it the central theme of his book *Atlantis Found*, featuring his famous fictional character, Dirk Pitt.

In terms of locations for the fabled, lost, ancient civilization of Atlantis, we seem to be left with three possibilities: the Azores, off the coast of Portugal; the Caribbean; and Antarctica before a massive tectonic plate shift moved it from off the coast of Europe and Africa down to its present location at the South Pole.

That covers the “where” question. Now we can move to the subject of “when.”

Timing Is Everything

Plato was insistent that the demise of Atlantis happened 11,600 years ago. His ancestor, Solon, visited Egypt and was first introduced to the story nine thousand years before Plato’s time. Plato wrote his *Dialogues* about four hundred years ago. That adds up to 9,400 years. Add another two-thousand-plus years to get to the present. Now we are at 11,400 years before our time. According to measurements taken from Greenland glaciers, the Younger Dryas Ice Age ended abruptly 11,600 years ago. That’s pretty darn close to being a dead-on match.

That was the time when global floods, brought on by the sudden melting that occurred at the end of the Younger Dryas Ice Age, caused the oceans to rise quickly and, in some cases, catastrophically, inundating shore-based port cities and coastal, developed regions.

This is science and chronology, not a flight of fancy. The facts are verifiable.

Coincidentally, this is also the time when many of the worldwide flood legends such as Noah’s Flood and the stories in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* claim that God destroyed humankind. It was when Göbekli Tepe was first built by an early, megalithic people who had, up until then, no prior experience with this kind of construction.

Plato did not have access to glacial core samples from Greenland, which prove that this was exactly when the Ice Age came to a sudden and catastrophic conclusion.

What does the demise of what we might call the Atlantis civilization have to do with us?

To put it bluntly, they may well have been the founders of everything we call home.

Mission Impossible: Us

In his book *Fingerprints of the Gods,* Graham Hancock synthesizes streams of information stemming from Egypt, Turkey, Greece, Peru, Mexico,

Siberia, the Arctic, and many other places around the globe and comes to this conclusion:

> An advanced civilization had been wiped out at the end of the last Ice Age. There were survivors who settled at various locations around the world and attempted to pass on their superior knowledge, including knowledge of agriculture and architecture, to hunter–gatherer peoples who had survived the cataclysm. Indeed even today we have populations of hunter–gatherers in the Kalahari Desert, for instance, and in the Amazon jungles, who co-exist with our advanced technology culture—so we should not be surprised that equally disparate levels of civilization might have co-existed in the past.

Hancock envisioned a great Ice Age civilization coming to a catastrophic end. The survivors then made their way by boat around the world, landing in places that would someday cradle what we call "our" civilization, helping the indigenous people climb their way up the ladder of cultural success that we enjoy today.

If he is correct, we are the recipients of a forgotten civilization—an Atlantis tradition—who were the brains behind the *Zep Tepi*, the "First Time," when ancient Egyptians believed that gods walked on Earth and began Egyptian history. They were the instructors who taught a bunch of hunter–gatherers in Turkey how to forsake their wandering ways, settle down, and build the world's first temple, Göbekli Tepe, while instigating what we now call the Agricultural Revolution in order to sustain the workers. They were the inspiration behind the great Mesoamerican cultures of Mexico and South America, whose descendants included the ancient Olmec, Maya, Inca, and, later, Aztec civilizations.

Skeptics want proof. They want a single, incontrovertible fact that removes all doubt. Believers make the claim that a whole pile of circumstantial evidence is probably all we're going to get. In a court of law, that is often the case. Until the verdict is rendered, however, the Atlantis tradition is an engaging one. The survivors of the Atlantis catastrophe might very well be the founders of everything we hold dear today.

Don't laugh too hard, skeptics. It might well prove to be the case that what you scorn is what made us who we are.

MU/LEMURIA

> Back when the planet was young, the air much denser, and the water, thinner, there stood a vast continent which, today, can only be found in myths and the floor of the Atlantic Ocean. The continent, which went by the name Mu, or the Motherland, was believed to contain an ancient civilization, Lemuria, which existed prior to and during the time of Atlantis, some 14,000 years ago.
>
> —Tony Bernardo

Although it is certainly the most well known, Atlantis isn't the only "lost continent" story circulating throughout history. Two other traditions share the spotlight from time to time. They talk about the lost civilizations of Mu and Lemuria. Sometimes, as in the quotation above, the two are used interchangeably, but as a general rule, Lemuria refers to a hypothetical, sunken continent in the Pacific, while Mu is thought to be a lost landmass off the coast of India.

The main thing they share in common is disdain from academic traditionalists who usually lump any reference to either Mu or Lemuria into the category of "fringe" history.

Believers, however, consider them to be the cradle of civilization. According to their theory, after being devastated by an ancient catastrophe, the survivors of a civilization that arose on one of these "lost" continents went on to be the ancestors of everyone on Earth today.

In 2013, Frank Joseph published a book called *Before Atlantis: 20 Million Years of Human and Pre-Human Cultures*. His thesis was that about seventy-five thousand years ago, our ancient ancestors existed in a sort of evolutionary crisis. We were hemmed in both geographically and biologically. Not much separated us from any other animal species. Humans were abundant but not going anywhere.

Then, overnight, everything changed. Mount Toba erupted, causing a huge firestorm in Indonesia.

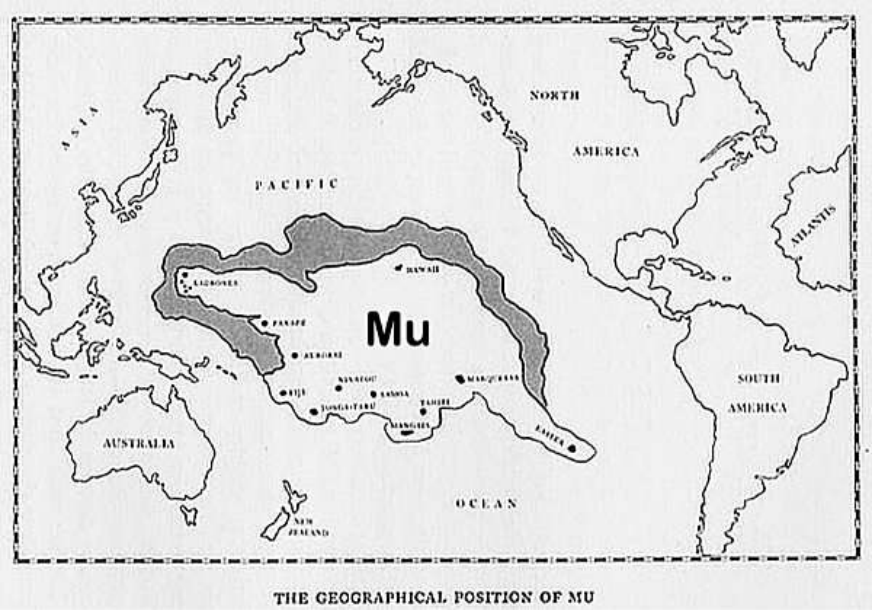
Scientists have long known that the eruption of both Mount Vesuvius and the island of Santorini destroyed civilizations that subsequently lay buried for thousands of years, but Mount Toba could well have been the single most violent eruption in the history of human life on this planet. It

exploded with a released energy equaling the effect of a mile-wide asteroid colliding with Earth, sending so much dust and ash into the sky that it blotted out the Sun, reflected its rays back out into space, and introduced a phenomenon called volcanic winter that lasted for perhaps as long as ten years.

At least a dozen of these supervolcanoes still exist today, awaiting a future day of reckoning. Some of them lie at the bottom of the sea. It's simply impossible to know what kind of tidal waves they will unleash if they become active. Scientists say that it is not even a matter of "if." It is simply a matter of "when."

Joseph believes that when the eruption took place, humankind had reached what scientists call a genetic bottleneck. According to this theory, which is supported by genetic evidence, the human population decreased sharply in the chaos and destruction that followed the eruption, reducing worldwide population levels to between three thousand and five thousand individuals. DNA research suggests that every human alive on the planet today is descended from this small group of survivors. Food supplies disappeared. Temperatures fell sharply as light from the Sun was blotted out. It must have been absolutely terrifying to the scattered remnants who managed to survive.

If this theory is true, genetic differentiation in the human species didn't develop over millions of years, as has been previously supposed, but only in the last seventy-five thousand years. This introduces staggering repercussions both on what might have been and what was lost in terms of millions of years of human evolutionary thought and development.



THE GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION OF MU

In his *The Lost Continent of Mu* (1927) author James Churchward surmised that Mu was a large content in the middle of the Pacific.

What died in the cataclysm? Did human populations exist that had progressed a lot further than we will ever know? Who was left? If only widespread, Stone Age cultures who lived on far-off islands or high in mountainous terrains, those whose lifestyle consisted of subsistence gathering, survived the catastrophe, civilization would have had to start all over again from the least developed of our species. We would have had to start, quite literally, from the beginning. A few million years of our development would have been wiped out.

However, the devastation proved to be beneficial in the long run. It forced the human race out of their geographical boundaries. According to Joseph:

> It signified a line drawn in the sand, after which *Homo sapiens*' diversity terminated and his racial diversity began, as mass migrations in search of better living conditions moved northward out of Africa. It was there, in Europe, that the so-called Great Leap Forward much later took place, as preserved in the magnificent cave paintings and stone sculptures of Paleolithic art. For all its near-genocidal fury, Toba made possible the advent of modern man.

He goes on to quote numerous myths and legends from the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia:

> These and numerous other traditions seem inescapably paralleled with the Old Testament's (Adam and) Eve and indigenous accounts of a sunken island-kingdom more famously known as Mu or Lemuria, described in a series of early twentieth-century books by the British Army Colonel and engineer, James Churchward. While directing Indian famine relief during the 1870s, he assisted in the translation of secret Hindu monastery tablets inscribed with the history of an early paradise in the Pacific, where humankind supposedly originated and eventually prospered for many centuries. After its inhabitants raised the world's first civilization, an unspecified natural calamity, about twelve thousand years ago, obliterated the Motherland. Some of its inhabitants allegedly perished, but enough survivors migrated to influence the subsequent development of high cultures as far removed from each other as India, Tibet, Southeast Asia, China, Japan, Polynesia, British Columbia, Mexico, and South America.

Thor Heyerdahl in his 1958 book *Aku Aku: The Secret of Easter Island* raised a lot of similar questions about the ancient history of Easter Island, which many people believe to be a remnant of a long-lost, submerged continent, but with the development of modern DNA research proving an extensive Polynesian ancestry, his interpretation of diffusion stories were, in the eyes of many traditionalists, discredited. Easter Island, however, is still considered to be ground zero for those who trace Lemuria legends.

Prehistoric artifacts discovered in India that date from the time of the eruption indicate that people coped fairly well with the aftereffects.

Recently, however, a new theory suggests that the Mount Toba eruption might not have caused as much devastation as was first thought. Charles Q. Choi, writing for *Live Science* in April 2013, reported that even though the number of humans dropped precipitously, the giant plume of ash that stretched from the South China Sea to the Arabian Sea might not have been quite as significant as we have been led to believe. Prehistoric artifacts

discovered in India that date from the time of the eruption indicate that people coped fairly well with the aftereffects. Furthermore, layers of dust appearing in the geologic record suggest that the land rebounded fairly quickly in the years following the eruption.

How do we explain the genetic bottleneck, the sudden drop-off of human population that happened at this time? Perhaps, Choi suggests, modern humans descended from small groups of people who left Africa at different times and were better equipped to survive than their predecessors, who died off during the eruptions.

The question remains up in the air at this point. As is usually the case, people tend to choose a side for personal reasons and then speak from a position of so-called authority.

Those who propose a theory of ancient human development that was subsequently lost due to a worldwide catastrophe tend to believe in an eruption/extinction conclusion.

Those whose professional credentials cause them to be bound to traditional Uniformitarianism guidelines regarding human evolution are more apt to conclude that Mount Toba wasn't as big a deal as has been previously thought.

A third group, however, view the problem in terms of the future rather than past history. They look at the volcano now rumbling beneath Yellowstone National Park. It has the potential to outdo Mount Toba's devastation by a substantial margin. Experts say it's only a matter of time. Is the United States about to become ground zero for another extinction event?

Meanwhile, underwater expeditions carried out off the coast of India still raise suspicions when they display pictures of ruins that certainly look to be constructed by humans right where legends of Mu claim they should be, so at this point, it might be valuable to go back to previous chapters of this book where we raised questions about these areas of the world and wondered if they might harbor clues to a lost civilization. It's simply too easy to sweep inconvenient facts about origins under the rug, especially when the primary reason for doing so is because they don't fit the traditional story we have all been taught.

"Alternative history" and "fringe history" are expressions of derisive marketing. They don't serve an important purpose if they are employed only

to mask prejudice and opinion.

Cascadia and the Lost Continent of the Pacific Northwest

> When the chief of the world below came up from his lodge, his tall form towered above the snow-capped peaks. Red-hot rocks as large as the hills hurtled through the skies. Burning ashes fell like rain.… Like an ocean of flame it devoured the forests on the mountains and in the valleys until it reached the home of the people. Fleeing in terror before it, the people found refuge in the waters of Klamath Lake.
>
> Once more the mountain shook. The chief of world below was driven into his home, and the top of the mountain fell upon him. The high mountain was gone.
>
> For many years rain fell in torrents and filled the great hole that was made when the mountain fell upon the chief of the world below.
>
> —Transcribed from a Klamath Indian legend

Earth is never at rest. It is constantly changing and reordering itself. Continents shift, weather patterns evolve, ice comes and goes, and what seems normal today will be obsolete tomorrow.

For many years, I lived in New England. When I was young, the oldtimers used to talk about how much more snow they used to get in the old days. I chalked it up to the faulty memories of senior citizens, but now, I'm a senior citizen myself. Recently, I had an opportunity to look at photographs I took over the course of many winters going back fifty years. I was amazed at how high the snowbanks were. I couldn't blame it on a rogue storm or two. The pictures covered a period of more than twenty years.

I was forced to admit that the weather has changed. Temperatures are higher than they used to be. I even took the trouble of looking up weather statistics to prove that I wasn't making the whole thing up. If weather changes that much in fifty years, I can only imagine what might have happened over the last few thousand. The only reason we don't notice the change is because it occurs slowly over a single human life span.

We now live, for example, between Ice Ages. The last one ended eleven thousand years ago. Everything our civilization ever developed and experienced has happened only in the last six thousand to eight thousand years. That seems like a long time to us, but compared with the 4.5 billion years that Earth has existed, or even the two million or three million years anatomically modern humans have been said to have been around, six thousand years is only a match snap in the darkness of time.

North America once spent a few million years bumping up against Africa. I see the proof of that every time I take a walk in my backyard and stop to look at an ancient layer of sediment that once formed the ancestral Appalachian Mountains. It's easy to see the folded marks of concussion once you know what to look for.

California is moving even as you read these words. Every earthquake along the San Andreas fault line reminds people who live there that western California is not really part of the United States. It is a separate piece of real estate that is simply scraping up against the rest of the North American continent as it slides north, where it will one day be part of Canada.

All this is a reminder that, geographically, things change. From our perspective, they change slowly, but they do change, so it is instructive to listen to legends of long ago, first told by a people who lived in a different time. If the photographs I snapped fifty years ago indicate change, these oral traditions are verbal pictures that go way, way further back than that.

Read, for instance, this version of an ancient western myth as told by Dustin Naef, author of *Mount Shasta's Forgotten History and Legends*, in the August 25, 2016, edition of *Ancient Origins* magazine:

It was said that the end came without warning.…

> Once, long ago, as the people slept, the sun came out at night. It shot a flaming arrow across the heavens which burst into thousands of fragments, which then fell to the earth. The people were startled out of their sleep by a rumbling and quaking of the earth. The skies above them were on fire. The waters of the lakes and oceans rose. Soon the waves became mountains of water that rose against the shores. The sun was blotted out and darkness covered the great green land and water. Terrified, the people ran to the hills to get away from the pounding water.

Naef goes on to describe how creeks and rivers led to severe flooding. The people retreated to the mountains, where they took refuge in caves. Eventually, only the mountaintops remained above the flood. Countless bodies were driven by the rampaging water and buried in mass graves. “Then a rain of ashes began to fall.…”

In the 1980s, some magazine articles began to acknowledge that the Pacific Northwest harbors a unique and varied climate, a unique and varied cultural history, and even a unique and varied geographical history. On maps, it may consist of parts of six different states, but those boundary lines were drawn arbitrarily by the government of the United States. They didn’t reflect the cultural and ecological reality of the place they began to call Cascadia. In 2015, David McCloskey even created a map of the region, calling it “the Great, Green Land.” It used to be called the Oregon Territory. Now it is sometimes called Chinook Ilahee, which means “land of the Chinook speakers.”

Drawing from American Indian legends, it was labeled “the Land of Falling Waters.” This title refers primarily to the many natural rivers and waterfalls the region boasts, but it also is a reference to ancient legends that remember what very well might prove to be historic events witnessed by human beings who lived there at the time.

Take this example from the Ojibwa people, who:

> … remember a comet called Long-Tailed Heavenly Climbing Star which swept low through the skies, scorching the Earth and leaving behind a different world. After that, survival was hard work. The weather was colder than before.

Graham Hancock in his book *America Before: The Key to Earth’s Lost Civilization* tells of his travels throughout this region:

> Until very recently it was believed that the Americas were amongst the last great landmasses on earth to have been inhabited by humans—who were thought to have arrived exclusively on foot from northeast Asia around 13,000 years ago by crossing the Bering Straits which formed a land-bridge to Alaska during the lowered sea-levels of the Ice Age. By contrast, anatomically modern humans, originating in Africa, are believed to have reached Europe, Asia, and even Australia, as far back as 60,000 years ago.

> We now know that something of immense importance is missing from this long-established picture, and that the Americas were first peopled more than 130,000 years ago—many tens of thousands of years before human settlements became established elsewhere. Yet because of the dominance of the former— and now entirely discredited—theory of the late peopling of the Americas, and of mental blocks associated with that theory, scientists for too long focused only on the "Old World" in their search for the origins of civilization and have not considered the revolutionary possibility that those origins might in fact be found in the "New World."
>
> Was a technologically and spiritually advanced civilization destroyed in the global cataclysm that ended the last Ice Age?

You won't find archaeological evidence of ancient-origin myths unless you begin to look for it, and you won't start to look until you take the legends seriously. Then, when you do, evidence suddenly reveals itself after "hiding" in plain sight.

Take the case of the mysterious Great Wall of California (also called the Berkeley Mystery Walls or the East Bay Walls). Beginning in the hills above East Bay in Berkeley and running up and down the hills for fifty miles (eighty kilometers) all the way to San Jose is a long rock wall that is not explained in any historical records. When people began to wonder about the possible historical accuracy of ancient myths that describe a long-lost civilization, they began to find that the Northern California wall was only the tip of the iceberg. As it turns out, a series of walls and stone circles stretch north all the way to the Oregon border, connecting southern California with Cascadia. Could this once have marked the boundary of an ancient civilization?

It might not be as impressive as the Great Wall of China, but the Great Wall of California certainly makes up for it with its air of mystery. Who built this wall that is part of a series of structures running from the Bay Area up to Oregon?

Some archaeologists began to wonder if more was here than met the eye. Conjuring up superficial similarities to the Great Wall of China, they postulated that the wall was built by ancient Chinese from Mongolia—sailors from the Zheng Hui fleet that set out from China to circumnavigate the globe. Stone anchors that appeared to be of ancient origin had previously been

found in Baja California. Some mysterious writings by a Buddhist monk were discovered in Central America. A mysterious Chinese junk had been found buried beneath a sandbank in the Sacramento River near Chico, California. Was all this further evidence?

Skeptics, of course, immediately started proposing theories that they thought were much more believable.

Some said the walls were built by early missionaries to fence in livestock, possibly using Chinese, Mexican, or Native American workers, but no written records exist of anyone ever building even part of a wall that stretched more than fifty miles across the landscape. It was a wall, not an enclosure, and even if it was built for livestock, the fence was insufficient to keep even the least determined sheep or cattle penned in.

Some say that the Native American Costanoan tribe built the walls, but that doesn't hold up to serious scrutiny, either. They had no other tradition of such an endeavor.

The stones used in construction are quite heavy. They have sunk deeply into Earth. In some cases, only the top two or three feet of a seven-foot wall are left above the surface, indicating that the wall is very old. It was obviously meant to serve some purpose, but what that purpose was is a complete mystery.

Up until now, the walls have received little or no formal archaeological examination, so the whole project remains shrouded in mystery. Did the ancient citizens of what is now called Cascadia build them for purposes yet undetermined? No one knows.

In earlier chapters, we went into some depth about possible ancient civilizations in North America, including the Denisovans, the Clovis culture, and the Solutrean culture. There are many other possibilities, and speculation continues about an ancient civilization that might have once inhabited the land now being called Cascadia. But we know for certain, given actual and verified artifacts, that humans have been in this part of the country for a long time. Wherever humans go, they leave artifacts in their wake. Some of those artifacts are comprised of evidence in stone. Others, perhaps even more importantly, offer evidence in story.

The stories about Cascadia are many and varied. We need to start listening to them.

Cantre’r Gwaelod

Beneath the wave-swept ocean are many pretty towns
That hearkened to the bell-rings set pealing through the night.
Through negligent abandon by a watcher on the wall
The bells of Cantre’r Gwaelod submerged beneath the wave.
When the sea was surging with gales upon the wave
The gull, so pale, was failing to settle on their crest
When waves crashed on the sea-shore with thunder in its wake
The bells of Cantre’r Gwaelod are silent ’neath the wave.
But when the sea is quiet with waves that aren’t foam-flecked
and day is gently slipping behind the far-hill’s slope
sweet tones are heard a-rising and this I know as truth
The bells of Cantre’r Gwaelod are sounding ’neath the wave.
O! ring-out bells of childhood on ocean’s salty floor
for early strains of living sound in their song for me
Whilst live the shore I’ll think of on many quiet nights
and bells of Cantre’r Gwaelod still ringing ’neath the wave.

—The Bells of Cantre’r Gwaelod, *translated by Dyfed Lloyd Evans*

At low tide near Ynyslas, Ceredigion, Wales, one can view the stumps that are all that remain of an ancient forest. This is the same spot where Cantre'r Gwaelod could have been.

Whether or not you choose to believe in ancient stories of sunken islands and lost civilizations, many of them are worth exploring just for the sheer romanticism of their legend. Such is the saga of Cantre'r Gwaelod off the coast of Wales. The name means "the Lowland Hundred," and it lies, so the story goes, in Cardigan Bay between Ramsey Island and Bardsey Island about twenty miles (thirty-two kilometers) west of the present-day shoreline.

In the sixth century, Cantre'r Gwaelod, the "Atlantis" of the British Isles, was said to have been ruled by a legendary king named Gwyddno Garanhir. The story is so persistent that well into the seventeenth century, the land was called Maes Gwyddno ("Gwyddno's Land").

Like any good myth, how the land sunk beneath the sea has become a confusing mass of contradictory stories, and each bard swears that his is the true version.

One tale has it that Mererid, a priestess who guarded a fairy well,

allowed the water to overflow.

Another popular legend much heralded today is that Cantre'r Gwaelod used to be a fertile land. One acre there could grow as much as four acres anywhere else. It was protected from the sea's encroachment by a sturdy dyke. At low tide, the sluice gates were opened so that excess freshwater could drain off into the ocean. At high tide, the gates were closed. The man who was selected to perform this important task was named Seithennin, chosen for the job because he was a trusted friend of Gwyddno Garanhir himself.

The problem was that Seithennin was a heavy drinker. One night during a party at the palace, a storm sneaked up the coast from the Southwest. The stories differ at this point. Some say that Seithennin was having too much fun. Others say that he fell asleep from the effects of his favorite beverage. Whatever happened, he neglected to close the sluice gates. The sea rushed in to claim its own, and sixteen villages were destroyed in the ensuing flood. All that saltwater ruined the land, and the surviving villages were forced to move on to different pastures.

Some versions blame Mererid the priestess, claiming it was her job to guard the sluice gates, but she was distracted by Seithennin's drunken, lecherous advances and was negligent in her duties.

Whatever the cause, some very important researchers claim that the legends are an allegorical rendering of a historical event. It is said that some folks are even raising money to carry out an underwater archaeological expedition to search for the lost land. These claims are given credence when, at low tide, evidence of prehistoric forests appear beneath the waves. Fossilized human footprints have been spotted along with artifacts such as walkways and ancient postholes. Recently, people have even found stone tools in the area. When processing procedures are carried out on these artifacts, they yield very old dates that go back thousands, not hundreds, of years. Thus, it seems as if Cantre'r Gwaelod is, indeed, a prehistoric home to an ancient civilization. It is entirely possible that these discoveries helped spark the romantic legends and songs about this place. It is also possible that the stories are morality tales invented to teach a lesson about ethics, morals, and the dangers of sloth, lust, or temperance.

In the end, it probably doesn't matter which explanation is correct. Take Noah's Flood, for instance. Whether or not it ever really happened, five

thousand years later, they're still making movies about it, and probably, five thousand years from now, Welsh poets will still compose songs such as "The Bells of Cantre'r Gwaelod."

HY-BRASIL

> Is Hy-Brasil still out there? No documented sightings have occurred since the last in 1872, and although researchers have found areas of land that may have once been mistaken for an island, it does not seem to exist. Not in any way we can see, that is. If it does, however, appear once every seven years, then that means it will again appear in 2019. So if you happen to find yourself on the west coast of Ireland, keep your eyes open. You may be surprised.
>
> —Rob Schwartz in *Yesterday's Myths and Mysteries*

In the early morning hours of December 26, 1980, Sergeant James Penniston, A1C John Burroughs, and A1C Ed Cabansag, all serving on a U.S. Air Force Security Police team in Suffolk, England, received a call to investigate a craft of unknown origin that had landed in the Rendlesham Forest. When they arrived on the scene, they reported seeing pulsing, multicolored lights emanating from within the woods. Penniston and Burroughs went in to investigate, leaving Cabansag behind to serve as a radio relay station. All three men could see the strange lights.

As Penniston and Burroughs approached what was apparently some kind of unknown craft, both men reported what they described as "abnormal sensations" on their hair, skin, and clothing. The air seemed to be electrically charged, but they heard absolutely nothing. To both men, it seemed as if time had somehow been affected as well. They described it as a "time distortion" in which everything slowed down. They found it difficult to move.

The craft was sitting silently at the bottom of a berm in the forest of pine trees. Penniston approached the craft, reporting it to be a nonaerodynamic, triangular-shaped, black, glossy craft of an unknown make. He had never seen anything like this before. It had patterns of blue, yellow, and red markings on its surface. He later reported that even though he was a USAF-trained aircraft observer and crash investigator, he had found it very difficult to put into words what he was seeing. As part of his training, he had studied both NATO and Warsaw Pact aircraft inventories, but this was unique to his

experience.

He was able to take photographs and measurements, including drawings that he faithfully noted in his USAF-issued notebook, of the strange markings he observed on the craft.

After recording the scene, he walked forward and put his hand on the side of the craft. The skin of the craft was smooth, but the etched symbols, in his words, “felt like sandpaper.”

Suddenly, he was enveloped by a brilliant, white light. He could neither see nor hear and felt totally alone. After an undetermined amount of time, his sight returned. He found himself standing next to the craft, facing the strange symbols he had reached out to touch. Because of the white light, he became afraid that the craft was about to explode, so he took a defensive position behind a nearby tree. The craft then lifted up a short way off the ground, maneuvered between the trees, ascended to treetop level, and then disappeared less than a second later.

The next day, after turning in his report, he was recovering in his room when he began visualizing ones and zeros in his mind. He somehow felt compelled to reach for his notebook and record the numbers in the order he saw them. Shortly thereafter, the mental images disappeared.

After filing the last of his reports, he could only continue on with his life, trying not to think too much about the strange experience. He was, of course, interviewed from time to time and became part of the whole UFO mythology.

However, in 2010, after a casual conversation with a UFO researcher, he was asked if he still had the lists of recorded numbers. When he opened his old notebook, the researcher immediately recognized the ones and zeros as a form of binary code and offered his help in converting or deciphering them. Upon completion of the project, they recognized map coordinates of 52.0942532N and 13.131269W. These are the precise coordinates of the mythical island of Hy-Brasil, sometimes called “Ireland’s Atlantis,” a submerged island off the coast of Ireland.

Atlantis may be the most famous lost, ancient island civilization in the world, but in terms of eyewitness accounts and mythological documentation, it can’t hold a candle to Hy-Brasil, which until recently even used to appear on maps. Located 120 miles (193 kilometers) west of Ireland, old maps

beginning back in 1325 and continuing right up until the 1800s used to feature it prominently. Sometimes, during low sea levels, it still appears as a shoal. The so-called Porcupine Bank, discovered in 1862, might well have once been an island. An 1830 map labels it Brazil Rock.

Because the old maps pictured it as a circle with a channel running through it from east to west, it reminded the old sailors of Plato's description of Atlantis— hence its nickname—but for centuries, it took on an even more mystical nature. In legends of old, it was "the land of saints," a paradise that became visible only to the pure of heart. It was the home of an ancient, advanced civilization that was clouded by mists except for one day every seven years, when it became visible but could not be reached.

A 1572 map clearly shows the island of Brasil (or Hy-Brasil) existing off the west coast of Ireland.

Its names were legion: Hy-Brasil, Hy-Breasal, Hy-Brazil, By-Breasil, and Brazir. All of them probably are derived from the Celtic name Breasal, which means "High King of the World."

In a 1325 map drawn by Angelino Dulcert, a Genoese cartographer, it was called Bracile. A later Catalan atlas, which may have been seen by Christopher Columbus, pictures it as two islands that bore the name Illa de Brasil. In 1436, it was labeled Sola de Brasil by the Venetian cartographer Andrea Bianco. For a while, it was called Mater Island. It was a part of the

Ortelius Map of Europe and the Europa Mercator Map. Not even Atlantis ever received this much verification.

In 1480, John Jay Jr. sailed out of Bristol, determined to find the elusive island. After two months at sea, he came back to port empty-handed. The next year, two ships, the *George* and the *Trinity*, went back. They had no luck, either.

An intriguing fragment surfaced from 1497, however. Pedro de Ayala, a Spanish diplomat, reported to the Catholic monarchs of Spain that John Cabot, the first European to visit North America since the time of the Vikings almost five hundred years earlier, had "discovered in the past by the men from Bristol who found Brasil." Apparently, someone had reported seeing the elusive island.

Nearly two centuries went by with no reports until a Scottish sea captain by the name of John Nisbet claimed to have seen it during a voyage from France to Ireland in 1674. He supposedly landed a party of four sailors, who spent a whole day there. They claimed to have met a wise, old man, a mysterious magician, who lived alone in a stone castle. He gave them gold and silver. According to them, the island was populated only by a large number of giant, black rabbits.

A follow-up expedition was launched by Capt. Alexander Johnson, who also managed to land and confirm Nisbet's report.

His was the second to last reported sighting. The last was in 1872. Robert O'Flaherty and T. J. Westropp claim to have visited the island on three separate occasions. They found it so amenable that they brought their families with them to see it for themselves. They all witnessed it appear out of nowhere and then vanish from sight right before their eyes.

Hy-Brasil then disappears from history except in legend and myth. After that, the stories took over. It became the home of the ancient gods of Irish mythology. It was inhabited by priests or monks who guarded an ancient and closely protected knowledge about how to create an advanced civilization when the time was ripe. St. Brendan's famous voyage, which many think took him to the Americas, actually stopped off at Hy-Brasil. Merlin the magician, of course, figures in its history from time to time.

It formed the stuff of legend, relegated to folklore and mythology, until its location was suddenly confirmed one late December night in 1980 and

brought to light in 2010.

Along with the coordinates of Hy-Brasil, Jim Penniston claims that also in the lists of binary code he received that night were found coordinates of several other ancient sites around the world, among them the Giza Pyramids and the Nazca lines, and at the very bottom of the list was found an “origin year” of 8100.

What does it all mean? Speculation runs rampant. Penniston’s testimony concerning what is now called the Rendlesham Forest Incident is readily available on YouTube and other Internet sites as well as many TV programs. In the end, it ranks right up there with the many mysteries, both ancient and modern, that point to a reality bigger than what we usually dream about. The more we learn, it appears as though Sir Arthur Eddington was right when he said, “The universe is not only stranger than we imagine, it is stranger than we *can* imagine.”

GOING UNDERGROUND

> War, volcanic disasters, genocide, and conquer—there are many reasons why a once vibrant, populated city is lost to the world.
>
> —escapehere.com

Throughout history, large numbers of our species seem to have had a fascination for underground civilizations. Mythology is full of stories about people ascending from below to eventually live on the surface of the planet. Perhaps these are Freudian memories of our experience in the womb. Maybe they are echoes of the experience we enjoyed for untold thousands of years during the eons when caves furnished safety and shelter from the storm for our earliest human ancestors. Maybe they remind us, on a deeply submerged psychological level, of the painted caves of western Europe where we see the first example of religious expression. There we developed a capacity for symbolic art, the trait that demonstrated our blossoming into spiritual humans and not just anatomically modern ones.

Whatever they may represent, caves and underground dwellings figure prominently in our history. Many First Nations tribes of the United States tell stories of their ancestors climbing up through a hole in the ground to reach this world after a previous belowground world was destroyed by some type of cataclysm.

Michael and Kathleen Gear gave this story a distinct spin in their historically accurate and immensely entertaining fictional book *People of the Wolf*. It's a part of their successful "The First North Americans" series, which follows a band of Siberian hunters across the Beringia land bridge as the last Ice Age is winding down. Following the Yukon Valley south, they enter the Pacific Northwest by actually traversing a tunnel carved by the river under the glacial ice, effectively acting out a geologically feasible interpretation of the idea of entering "this world" through an underground entrance from the "former" world. It certainly makes sense that such an experience would be remembered in a civilization's oral history and mythology.

DERINKUYU

In 1963, so the story goes, a man living in Cappadocia excavated some large stones from his basement while renovating his house. Behind them, he found an ancient tunnel that led to more tunnels, then more tunnels, and more after that. When he reported his find and the experts descended, what they discovered was a complex, underground city that once was home to some twenty thousand people and their livestock, wine and oil presses, storage cellars, and chapels. A large, 180-foot ventilation shaft ensured fresh air. Evidence suggests that the city, long after its construction, might have later been used by Christians who built a religious school and a church.

Constructed around 2,800 years ago—possibly by the Phrygians—the underground city of Derinkuyu had enough room for about 20,000 people, their livestock, food, and other supplies. One possible reason for living underground would have been to escape the threats of invading armies, but that theory is not without its flaws.

They named the complex after the city that had been built over it on the surface: Derinkuyu. After more exploration, it was discovered that Derinkuyu is only one of several more such underground cities, spread out over Cappadocia in Turkey. Who built them? Why? When?

Speculation soon became quite popular. Erich von Däniken, for instance, was quick to claim that the underground complex was built in ancient times as a refuge from fallout that originated in a war between two alien factions who were engaged in what amounted to nuclear warfare in the skies over planet Earth. Similar claims followed.

Traditional archaeologists had their doubts. They claimed it was built by Indo-European Phrygians somewhere around 2,800 years ago, who died out during the Roman era. Later, it was used for concealment by Christians who were hiding from the advancing Muslims, first during the Arab–Byzantine wars and then during Mongolian incursions of the fourteenth century. When the area came under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, Cappadocian Greeks moved in, remaining in the subterranean cities off and on until as late as the early years of the twentieth century. Finally, in 1923, Christians were

expelled from Turkey. Most of them immigrated to Greece. The tunnels were closed off and forgotten until 1963, when they were rediscovered.

The site was finally opened to tourists in 1969.

Those who are enchanted by mystery remain unimpressed by all the prevailing theories. Their arguments run along these lines:

- It takes a long time to excavate what amounts to a six-story complex, even in soft limestone. If you're trying to establish a refuge because of an imminent threat from either Muslims or ancient aliens, you simply don't have time to prepare such a place.
- No prehistoric artifacts have been found in the caves. The evidence gathered so far is all post-Phrygian, meaning not more than 2,800 years old.
- This argument is countered by those who claim that is to be expected since recent civilizations would have extended the original construction, clearing away any surviving ancient artifacts.
- Why would a civilization seek to hide from enemies underground in the first place? Twenty thousand people would certainly leave evidence of coming and going, and air shafts and smoke holes would make it pretty easy for an enemy to simply block the exits and wait for the inhabitants to stick their heads up to see what was going on.
- As for ancient aliens, any ancient alien theory is bound to be ridiculed by scoffers, but where is the evidence to suggest that intergalactic warfare was carried out on the surface? In other words, when it comes to deciphering the mysterious caverns and tunnels of Derinkuyu, the answer is still up for grabs.
- Why was it built? No one knows for sure.
- When was it built? No one knows for sure.
- Who built it? No one knows for sure.
- What happened to the inhabitants? No one knows for sure.

Only one thing is known for sure. It's there. Someone built it a long time ago, perhaps further back in time than modern archaeologists speculate. They

must have had a compelling reason to pull off such an audacious feat.

Then it became lost to history, its presence completely forgotten, and no one knows why.

NAOURS

Not all underground cities are mysterious. The ancient settlement of Naours in northern France, for instance, consists of some three hundred underground rooms carved out of limestone about 100 feet (30 meters) below the surface. It is generally thought that it was first carved by the Romans as a quarry in the third century and later expanded by the locals, who used it as a shelter during the Middle Ages. Evidence exists that Viking invaders hid out there in the ninth century, but by the time of the Thirty Years' War, a population of some three thousand people lived in hiding from constantly marauding bands of soldiers.

The city featured chapels, stables, its own wells, and even bakeries, so it was probably quite a progressive place. The people seem to have been very clever. Smoke from the bakery ovens, for instance, was directed out through existing surface cottages and buildings so as not to attract attention. Apparently, the ruse worked very successfully.

A chapel in the undergound city of Naours in northern France was originally part of a quarry carved out by the Romans.

CAPPADOCIA

Naours, however, consisted of a single city. Cappadocia in central Turkey was home to an entire civilization.

A few years ago, the *Hurriyet Daily News* announced the "biggest archaeological finding of 2014." An ancient city was discovered beneath the Nevs¸ehir fortress, expanding out into the surrounding countryside. At least 3.5 miles (7 kilometers) of tunnels and chambers hide churches, escape galleries, and dwelling places that were constructed at least five thousand years ago.

Nevşehir province was already famous as the home of Derinkuyu. Now it appears that the whole area may have been home to a thriving underground community, much of which is still to be discovered. Archaeologists are calling it the largest underground civilization in the world. To think that it was first built during the time of the construction of the Giza Pyramids is almost mindboggling. How did they ever do it? More than two hundred underground villages contain secret passages, rooms, ancient temples, and storage facilities.

People lived their lives and died in these caverns. Why? No one knows, but that may not even be the most intriguing question. The caves of Cappadocia weren't discovered until 2014. What else yet remains to be found?

THE GIZA PLATEAU

A lost history is hidden beneath the Pyramids of the Giza Plateau. For the most part, traditional Egyptologists, while being quite aware of it, have ignored it and decided not to share it with the public. Why? Because it doesn't fit the accepted story of how and why the Pyramids came to be built.

Beneath the ancient city of Memphis lies a labyrinth of subterranean passageways, shafts, and chambers filled with artifacts that reveal a story much older than the one we are taught in school. They imply that the Pyramids were built where they are because the place was already sacred ground. If that is so, then apparently the underground complex predates the Pyramids, perhaps by thousands of years. Only in the last few decades have determined scholars been able to pierce through the veil of secrecy and

present substantial information, and that is only because they were forced to do so by men such as Andrew Collins. When Collins confronted Egyptologist Zahi Hawass with incontrovertible proof that the caves existed, he was met with barely concealed laughter. Then, when finally forced to admit their existence, Hawass called them “Collins’ Caves.” Their discovery proves once again that much of our story remains a mystery. We are a complex species with a complicated past.

Herodotus once called the area “an endless wonder.” He was talking about the countryside surrounding Memphis and the Faiyum Oasis. Near its shoreline was a great, underground complex that boasted some 1,500 rooms and an endless labyrinth that the Greek philosopher/historian was not permitted to inspect.

“The passageways were baffling and intricate,” he wrote, “and were originally built to store the countless ancient texts and scrolls studied in detail by the ancient Egyptian priests.”

Herodotus was duly impressed. In his words:

> There I saw twelve palaces regularly disposed, which had communication with each other, interspersed with terraces and arranged around twelve halls. It is hard to believe they are the work of man. The walls are covered with carved figures, and each court is exquisitely built of white marble and surrounded by a colonnade. Near the corner where the labyrinth ends, there is a pyramid, two hundred and forty feet in height, with great carved figures of animals on it and an underground passage by which it can be entered. I was told very credibly that underground chambers and passages connected this pyramid with the pyramids at Memphis.

No one since Herodotus apparently paid attention to this underground complex. No one, that is, until Dr. Jim Hurtak in 1978. Using ground-penetrating radar, he decided to do some searching. What he discovered surprised him. He had not deliberately set out to challenge the traditional story of the Giza Plateau, but while mapping the area described by Herodotus thousands of years ago, he discovered massive, underground chambers beneath the entire Giza complex that are larger than anything built by modern engineers. Even more surprising, they appear to be at least fifteen thousand years old. He called it a “gigantic underground metropolis.”

Other ancient authors wrote about this complex, including Lamblichus

of Apamea, a Syrian Neo-Platonist philosopher. He was the first to say that an entrance to the labyrinth lies under the body of the nearby Sphinx. In his words:

> This entrance, obstructed in our day by sands and rubbish, may still be traced between the forelegs of the crouched colossus. It was formerly closed by a bronze gate whose secret spring could be operated only by the Magi. It was guarded by public respect, and a sort of religious fear maintained its inviolability better than armed protection would have done. In the belly of the Sphinx were cut out galleries leading to the subterranean part of the Great Pyramid.
>
> These galleries were so artfully crisscrossed along their course to the Pyramid that, in setting forth into the passage without a guide throughout this network, one increasingly and inevitably returned to the starting point.

In 300 B.C.E., an author known only as Crantor wrote that a set of underground pillars were buried in Egypt. Upon them were written texts that contained information about the events of prehistory. They also revealed the records of the Anunnaki of Mesopotamian fame. To reach them, you entered:

> … an underground place, entered through a tunnel, its entrance hidden by sand and by what they call Huwana (the Sphinx) … his teeth as the teeth of a dragon, his face the face of a lion. He is unable to move forward, nor is he able to move back, but they crept up on him from behind, and the way to the secret abode of the Anunnaki was no longer blocked.

There is more beneath the Sphinx and Great Pyramids than tombs. According to Dr. Jim Hurtak, there are huge chambers underground that go back some 15,000 years.

These are extremely ancient texts, many of them fragmented, but a chamber is known to exist under the Sphinx. Why aren't we told about any of this material?

As far as I can determine, the only reason is because it doesn't fit the accepted story about why and when the Sphinx was built. A lot of careers would be in jeopardy if the truth were to come out.

However, a lot more hidden information is scattered throughout the historical record.

Ancient Sumerian texts talk about the famous lion of the Giza Plateau, but they imply that she was placed there not to represent Khufu but rather to guard both the Pyramids and the large, underground caverns beneath them. If this is so, the Sphinx, at least, and maybe even the Pyramids themselves are far older than Egyptian civilization.

Pliny the Elder, a fourth-century historian, documents the secret passageway beneath the Sphinx. Apparently, the ancient writers were not under the same academic pressure as modern Egyptologists are.

Ammianus Marcellinus, another fourth-century Roman historian, wrote:

> Inscriptions which the ancients asserted were engraved on the walls of certain underground galleries and passages were constructed deep in the dark interior to preserve ancient wisdom from being lost in the flood.

An Arab historian named Altelemsani contributed a manuscript that is now displayed in the British Museum. He tells of an underground chamber located between the Great Pyramid and the Nile River:

> In the days of Ahmed Ben Touloun, a party entered the Great Pyramid through the tunnel and found in a side-chamber a goblet of a glass of rare color and texture. As they were leaving, they missed one of the party and, upon returning to seek him, he came out to them naked and laughing said, “Do not follow or seek for me,” and then rushed back into the pyramid. His friends perceived that he was enchanted.
>
> Upon learning about strange happenings under the Pyramid, Ahmed Ben Touloun expressed a desire to see the goblet of glass. During the examination, it was filled with water and weighed, then emptied and re-weighed. The historian wrote that it was “found to be of the same weight when empty as when full of water.”

I didn’t know about any of this when I visited the Giza Plateau. If I had, I might have had more interest in the ground beneath my feet. Was I really standing on top of something even more magnificent than what I was looking at?

It seems as though what these ancients wrote about was not just based on hearsay. One, at least, was an eyewitness. His name was Masoudi, and he lived a thousand years ago. According to him, some kind of advanced technology guarded the secrets of the Giza labyrinth. Only those who “by their conduct were deemed worthy of admission” could enter the sacred space:

> Written accounts of Wisdom and acquirements in the different arts and sciences were hidden deep, that they might remain as records for the benefit of those who could afterward comprehend them.… I have seen things that one does not describe for fear of making people doubt one’s intelligence. But still, I have seen them.
>
> In 1993, the aforementioned Egyptologist Zahi Hawass was reported to

have finally pulled back at least a corner of the curtain draped over modern Egyptian studies. In a newspaper article headlined “Mystery Tunnel in Sphinx,” he was cited as follows:

> Workers repairing the ailing Sphinx have discovered an ancient passage leading deep into the body of the mysterious monument. The Giza Antiquities chief, Mr. Zahi Hawass, said there was no dispute the tunnel was very old. However, what is puzzling is: who built the passage? Why? Moreover, where does it lead? Mr. Hawass said he had no plans to remove the stones blocking the entrance. The secret tunnel burrows into the northern side of the Sphinx, about halfway between the Sphinx’s outstretched paws and its tail.

I visited the Sphinx at about this time. It was surrounded by scaffolding as workers labored to repair the damage done by time and the elements. Little did I think at the time that they were discovering something even more mysterious than what was visible through their intricate walkways.

Legends abound about the Sphinx and the Giza Plateau. Sometimes, it’s hard to keep romantic emotions from overpowering cold, hard facts.

Legends abound about the Sphinx and the Giza Plateau. Sometimes, it’s hard to keep romantic emotions from overpowering cold, hard facts. Ezra, the scribe of the Old Testament, is said to have had knowledge of the underground complex. Enoch of old visited it. It remains of interest to many people who cannot obtain permission to explore.

A 1972 newspaper article out of Cairo sums up the traditionalist’s position very well:

> No one should pay any attention to the preposterous claims in regard to the interior of the Great Pyramid or the presumed passageways and unexcavated temples and halls beneath the sand in the Pyramid district made by those who are associated with the so-called secret cults or mystery societies of Egypt and the Orient.

> These things exist only in the minds of those who seek to attract the seekers for mystery, and the more we deny the existence of these things, the more the public is led to suspect that we are deliberately trying to hide that which constitutes one of the great secrets of Egypt. It is better for us to ignore all of these claims than merely deny them. All of our excavations in the territory of the Pyramid have failed to reveal any underground passageways or halls, temples, grottos, or anything of the kind except the one temple adjoining the Sphinx.

I guess I'm one of those of whom it can be said, "These things exist only in the minds of those who seek to attract the seekers for mystery." However, since this article was written, the caves have become public knowledge and their existence, if not their particulars, is well documented. I still wonder why ancient writers took for granted much of what modern scholars want to ignore.

THE GRAND CANYON

Speaking of conspiracies, another American legend continues to generate almost as much interest as that of the underground labyrinth beneath the Egyptian Giza Plateau. It hints of an underground complex that is said to exist beneath the nooks and crannies of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River. This one doesn't have the endorsement of authors as old as Herodotus and Pliny the Elder, but it still has managed to generate a lot of ink. Once again, it involves the august Smithsonian Institution's Department of Archaeology.

The story begins with the April 5, 1909, edition of the *Arizona Gazette*. It told the strange story of Professors S. A. Jordan and G. E. Kinkaid, who were allegedly funded by the Smithsonian Institution to carry out explorations in the Marble Canyon region of the Grand Canyon. They emerged from the canyon with a tale that they had discovered a vast cavern system that contained evidence of a long-lost, ancient civilization.

According to archaeologists S. A. Jordan and G. E. Kinkaid, Marble Canyon (part of the Grand Canyon) harbors evidence of a long-lost civilization. Based on the artifacts found, it appeared to be related to Egypt in some way.

Over hundreds of millions of years, the Colorado River has been going about the business of slowly carving out this geological wonder of the world. My mother and father once stood on the south rim of the canyon and talked to a guide who pointed out a particularly beautiful rock formation, telling them it was 2,000,019 years and two weeks old. When my dad asked how he could be so precise, the guide responded, “Because when I first started working

here, they told me that formation was two million years old, and I've been here now for nineteen years and two weeks!" You've got to applaud the man's honesty.

The canyon is officially 277 miles (446 kilometers) long, up to 18 miles (29 kilometers) wide, and figures prominently in Native American folklore. The Hopi, for instance, believe that their ancestors entered this world through a Sipapu, or small hole on Earth, located on the canyon floor. Puebloan Kivas illustrate this myth. To enter them, you climb down a ladder though a hole in the ceiling. Some Hopi stories go so far as to claim that when people first stepped onto the surface of this world, they changed form from lizardlike beings to their current human incarnations. At this point in time, and from this place on Earth, the "First Peoples" divided and separated, journeying to all the different places they now live.

The canyon is thus both a natural phenomenon and a mystical, sacred place of creation. It's only natural that it gathers legends about it, so when two men, supposedly of scientific bent, given their alleged connections to the Smithsonian, claimed to have found evidence of an ancient civilization deep within its mysterious folds, the story quickly gathered momentum.

The area in which it was located was, of course, remote and inaccessible. In Kinkaid's words as quoted by the piece in the *Gazette:*

> First, I would impress that the cavern is nearly inaccessible. The entrance is 1,486 feet down the sheer canyon wall. It is located on government land and no visitor will be allowed there under penalty of trespass … I was journeying down the Colorado river in a boat, alone, looking for mineral. Some forty-two miles up the river from the El Tovar Crystal canyon, I saw on the east wall, stains in the sedimentary formation about 2,000 feet above the river bed. There are steps leading from this entrance some thirty yards to what was, at the time the cavern was inhabited, the level of the river.

After many trials and errors, he claimed to have found a whole system of tunnels and caverns chiseled out by hand. Eventually, it opened up into doorways that led a mile farther under the surface:

> The main passageway is about 12 feet wide, narrowing to nine feet toward the farther end. About 57 feet from the entrance, the first side-passages branch off to the right and left, along which, on both sides, are a number of rooms about the size of ordinary living

> rooms of today, though some are 30 by 40 feet square. These are entered by oval-shaped doors and are ventilated by round air spaces through the walls into the passages. The walls are about three feet six inches in thickness. The passages are chiseled or hewn as straight as could be laid out by an engineer. The ceilings of many of the rooms converge to a center. The side-passages near the entrance run at a sharp angle from the main hall, but toward the rear they gradually reach a right angle in direction.

How could such a story not be taken seriously? It's got exact measurements, precise locations, and scientific-sounding descriptions. He went on to talk about artifacts such as weapons, copper instruments, idols, pottery, and urns that Kinkaid thought looked as though they came from the Orient. His account was riveting:

> Over a hundred feet from the entrance is the cross-hall, several hundred feet long, in which are found the idol, or image, of the people's god, sitting cross-legged, with a lotus flower or lily in each hand. The cast of the face is oriental. The idol almost resembles Buddha, though the scientists are not certain as to what religious worship it represents. Taking into consideration everything found thus far, it is possible that this worship most resembles the ancient people of Tibet.
>
> Surrounding this idol are smaller images, some very beautiful in form; others crooked-necked and distorted shapes, symbolical, probably, of good and evil. There are two large cactus with protruding arms, one on each side of the dais on which the god squats. All this is carved out of hard rock resembling marble. In the opposite corner of this cross-hall were found tools of all descriptions, made of copper. These people undoubtedly knew the lost art of hardening this metal, which has been sought by chemicals for centuries without result. On a bench running around the workroom was some charcoal and other material probably used in the process. There is also slag and stuff similar to matte, showing that these ancients smelted ores, but so far no trace of where or how this was done has been discovered, nor the origin of the ore.

The people who read the article, obviously, were hooked, but Kinkaid went on in even greater detail:

> Among the other finds are vases or urns and cups of copper and gold, made very artistic in design. The pottery work includes enameled ware and glazed vessels. Another passageway leads to granaries such as are found in the oriental temples. They contain seeds of various kinds. One very large storehouse has not yet been entered, as it is twelve feet high and can be reached only from above. Two copper hooks extend on the edge, which indicates that some sort of ladder was attached. These granaries are rounded, as the materials of which they are constructed, I think, is a very hard cement. A gray metal is also found in this cavern, which puzzles the scientists, for its identity has not been established. It resembles platinum. Strewn promiscuously over the floor everywhere are what people call "cats eyes," a yellow stone of no great value. Each one is engraved with the head of the Malay type.

By this time, the people who read the original article were no doubt planning an immediate trip to the caverns themselves, though Kinkaid had reassured them that they would not be allowed in if they did manage to find the place.

Still, he offered more proof when he revealed that all the mummies found there were male. No children or females had been buried in the many crypts. This led him to authoritatively assert that the place was a "warrior's barracks."

Back in 1909, no one had yet seen the *Indiana Jones* movies, but Kinkaid certainly set the stage for the future blockbusters:

> There is one chamber of the passageway which is not ventilated, and when we approached it a deadly, snaky smell struck us. Our light would not penetrate the gloom, and until stronger ones are available we will not know what the chamber contains. Some say snakes, but other boo-hoo this idea and think it may contain a deadly gas or chemicals used by the ancients.

Kinkaid offered his opinion that the place had been there for millennia, that it was home to an ancient, lost civilization that had lived there for thousands of years, and that they had developed a very sophisticated technology and way of life.

No children or females had been buried in the many crypts. This led him to authoritatively assert that the place was a "warrior's barracks."

The *Arizona Gazette* even got in on the speculations. They believed, according to their editorial board, that Kinkaid and the Smithsonian had:

> … almost conclusively proved that the race which inhabited this mysterious cavern, hewn in solid rock by human hands, was of oriental origin, possibly from Egypt, tracing back to Ramses. If their theories are borne out by the translation of the tablets engraved with hieroglyphics, the mystery of the prehistoric peoples of North America, their ancient arts, who they were and whence they came, will be solved. Egypt and the Nile, and Arizona and the Colorado will be linked by a historical chain running back to ages which staggers the wildest fancy of the fictionist.

The newspaper, of course, sold out as soon as it hit the stands. Most of Arizona, it appeared, was abuzz with excitement. The legend had taken root and was soon flashed across the country.

Then, things started to fall apart. The Smithsonian denied ever financing such an expedition. They knew nothing about any artifacts that had supposedly been shipped to them. Their response was succinct and clear:

> Well, the first thing I can tell you, before we go any further, is that no Egyptian artifacts of any kind have ever been found in North or South America. Therefore, I can tell you that the Smithsonian Institute has never been involved in any such excavations.

That, of course, set off the conspiracy theorists. They accused the Smithsonian of a cover-up for reasons that were never made clear, but no Professor Kinkaid, or Jordan, for that matter, were found on the rolls of the Smithsonian Institution's Department of Anthropology, and no documentation, including pictures, could be located.

Then, things started to fall apart. The Smithsonian denied ever financing such an expedition. They knew nothing about any

artifacts that had supposedly been shipped to them.

Then it was discovered that the original article that had been published in the *Gazette* was written by an that anonymous writer who had, it seemed, used a pen name to disguise his identity. People began to suspect that the paper had published this piece of fake news in order to sell copies and increase circulation.

However, the damage had been done. The legend was now and forever here to stay. Kinkaid had disappeared, if he ever existed, and has never resurfaced.

This didn't stop the true believers, however. They believed then, and still continue to believe, that the storage rooms of the Smithsonian are hiding great treasures that the Institute doesn't want to reveal to the world. The fact that if they had such treasures, people would flock to the museum in droves doesn't seem to matter. The final scene in the first *Indiana Jones* movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, when the Ark of the Covenant is placed in a wooden box, the lid nailed shut, and wheeled into a nameless, label-less corridor and hidden away for all eternity is shocking proof to some people that such things happen. Government cover-ups are a regular weapon in the hands of conspiracy theorists, and they employ them with great regularity.

The story continues, but now, it seems to have a life of its own.

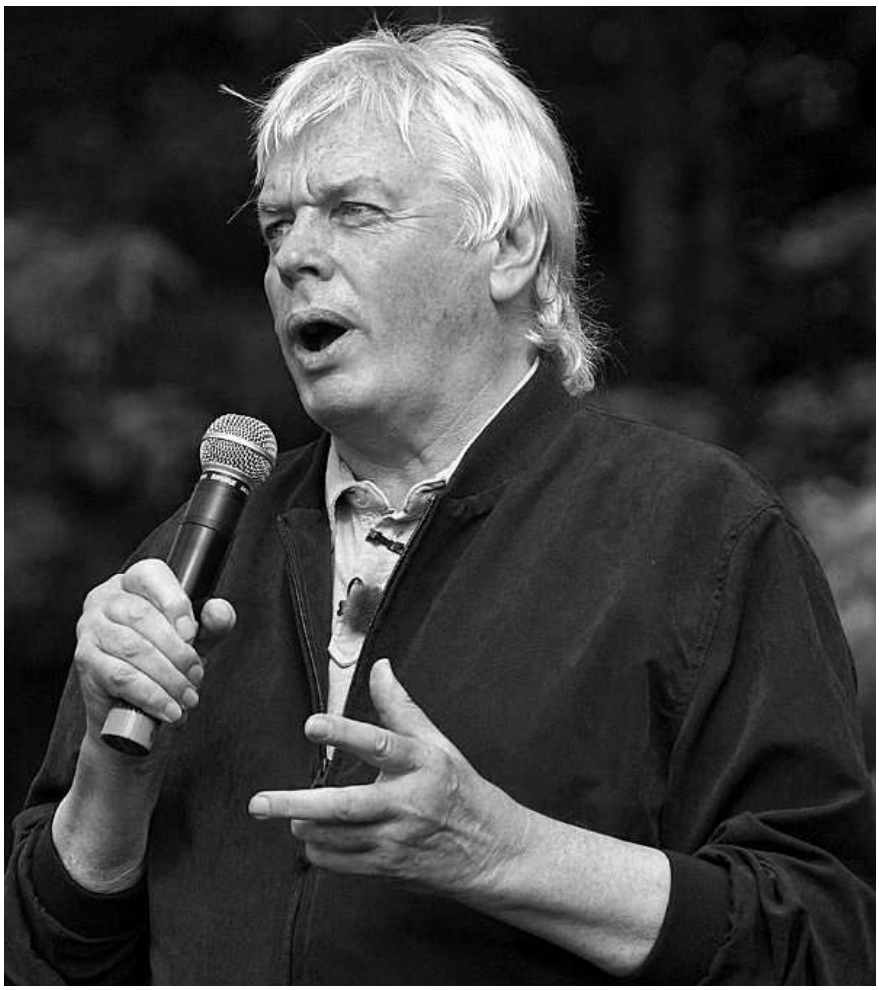
Jack Andrews, for instance, claimed in 1972 to have rediscovered the hidden complex:

> I think the "cave" described in the headline story of the *Arizona Gazette*, April 5, 1909 and its fantastic underground installation was, and still may be, located above an approximate six-mile stretch of the Colorado River in Marble Canyon, at the border of Marble Canyon and the Navajo Nation above an area near Kwagunt Rapids.

Likewise, John Rhodes, who, although very secretive about the whereabouts of the entrance, says he not only knows where it is but that an armed guard stands ready to repel all intruders should anyone attempt to enter.

David Icke, whose 1999 book *The Biggest Secret* makes the claim that

reptilian humanoids are in the process of taking over Earth and that the Grand Canyon is their secret base of operations, says this:



Author and conspiracy theorist David Icke has long claimed that Reptilians are secretly taking over Earth, disguising themselves as powerful leaders ranging from President Bill Clinton to the British royal family.

> In 1909 a subterranean city which was built with the precision of the Great Pyramid was found by G. E. Kincaid near the Grand Canyon in Arizona. It was big enough to accommodate 50,000 people and mummified bodies found were of oriental or possibly Egyptian origin, according to the expedition leader Professor S. A. Jordan. My own research suggests that it is from another dimension, the lower fourth dimension, that the reptilian control and manipulation is primarily orchestrated.

Brent Swancer, whose February 3, 2018, article for *Mysterious Universe* provided most of the research for this chapter, probably sums up the whole

mystery best of all. It's only appropriate to give him the last word:

> It is clear that the tale of Kincaid's mysterious caves continues to incite speculation and debate, and that is a spectacular story that captures the imagination and shows no real signs of waning. Is there anything to it or is this all a pure hoax or half-truths? If the caves ever did exist, then where were they and who were the inscrutable people who supposedly inhabited them? Were they made by ancient out-of place Egyptians, some sort of other lost civilization, or underground goddam reptilian monsters? Such a place and its relics would be absolutely groundbreaking, rewriting history itself, but considering the lack of articles talking about them and the complete lack of any evidence, the story is a dead end at best, and will probably remain mysterious and fuel for conspiracies, just as buried in mystery as the city itself.

SHIN-AU-AV

> The very thought that there could be a secret city lying beneath California's Death Valley that is more than 5,000 years old is astonishing and difficult for many people to believe. But for those who have entered the subterranean tunnels underneath the ground and visited this amazing location, it is all very real. There are many who believe that the underground city was once inhabited by an unknown race. Now, thousands of years later, the area is abandoned. However, visitors say that they have witnessed some strange artifacts while exploring inside.
>
> —Jim Brandon in *Weird America*

Quite a few years ago, I first saw, from the saddle of a bicycle, Death Valley in California. I was on a cross-country bike trip and was fascinated by the landscape ever since I had read Colin Fletcher's account of walking through it in his book *The Thousand-Mile Summer*.

The valley was everything it was reported to be, so I didn't spend a lot of time there, but had I known at the time of the possibility of a five-thousand-year-old city way down underground beneath my feet, which was once rumored to have been the abode of an unknown race, I might have been tempted to brave the heat for a little longer.

The Paiute Indians first told the story. As they remember the legend, thousands of years ago, at least in European time, an ancient Paiute chief ’s wife died. He was heartbroken. Despairing of life, he made an out-of-body soul journey into the land of the spirits. Here’s the story as told by Jim Brandon in his book *Weird America:*

> His journey into the land of the dead was a long ordeal. He passed through an endless underground passage following the trail of all brave Indian spirits. He was beset by fierce beasts, evil spirits, and supernatural demons. But the courageous chieftain fought his way onward through the ghoulish cavern. He won through to the sunlight at the far end and his feet resolutely carried him across the narrow ribbon of rock arched over a bottomless chasm. He stepped from the bridge of rock into the green meadows of the land of the dead, a great kingdom ruled by Shin-Au-Av.
>
> One daughter of Shin-Au-Av took the chief by the hand and led him to a vast natural amphitheater. It was a dancing place and many thousands of dead and happy Paiutes were dancing in a huge circle. The Paiute chief said he wanted to see his wife. The female told him that once he seized his wife, they must both leave the valley quickly without a single, backward glance. The Paiute chief promised he would do just that.
>
> He waited for several days and nights until he finally spotted her. Together they fled across the valley to the rock arch which spanned the bottomless chasm and joined the land of Shin-Au-Av to the long cavern and the world of human life.
>
> But he forgot he promised not to look back and he turned around to take a last look at the valley. The instant he looked back his wife vanished into thin air and he found himself standing alone. He rejoined his tribe and spent the remainder of his days describing the beauties and luxuries of the land of Shin-Au-Av.

Brandon goes on to tell the story of an Indian guide named Tom Wilson who, in the 1920s, said that his grandfather had discovered a labyrinth of caves far beneath the surface. There, he came across an underground city filled with people who spoke a language he had never heard before. They wore clothing made of leather.

The plot thickened when Bourke Lee, in his 1930 book *Death Valley*

Men, told about a meeting he had with two men named Jack and Bill. They told him about two other men named White and Thomason, who swore that they had discovered what they called an underground city. Supposedly, they had fallen through an old mine shaft near Wingate Pass. This was right on the old route used by the famous “twenty-mule-team-borax” miners who shipped borax out of Death Valley in the 1800s. They claimed they traveled through an underground cavern that extended as far as twenty miles north under the heart of the Panamint Mountains. There, they found an ancient, underground city. When they explored further, they discovered preserved mummies dressed in leather and buried with gold armbands and spears.

Apparently, the city had been abandoned for a very long time, but White and Thomason discovered that the complex had once been lit by a system of lights powered by underground gas veins. They claimed to have seen a large, round table that reminded them of some kind of council chamber, huge statues made of gold, vaults and drawers full of more gold as well as gemstones, and stone wheelbarrows that were perfectly balanced so that one man, or even a child, could transport heavy cargoes. The doors to the chambers were fitted with counterweights so that they could be easily swung shut.

Now things get strange. The West is full of legendary finds that were reported to the Smithsonian Institution, only to have the evidence disappear into the museum’s vast storage vaults. This one is no exception. White and Thomason supposedly carried out as much treasure as they could and arranged a deal with archaeologists from the Smithsonian to help them explore further. Their intent was to gain publicity and, of course, fame and fortune, but something happened, as it always seems to do. The men were betrayed, their artifacts disappeared, a cloudburst set off a landslide that blocked the entrance to the caverns, and they couldn’t find it again.

Another legend of the western lands faded away.

The West is full of underground mythology, though. Many stories exist about ancient people who lived long ago in a lost world of underground serpents or Ant People. Maybe Shin-Au-Av still lies buried somewhere beneath the desert sands, awaiting a future time when it will be once again rediscovered.

I didn’t see it from the saddle of my bicycle, but hey, I was pretty hot and tired that day.

LOST GODS AND WARRIORS

THE JOURNEYS OF ENOCH

> By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: "He could not be found, because God had taken him away." For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God.
>
> —Hebrews 11:5

In earlier chapters, we looked at lost, ancient civilizations that once existed in places as far removed from one another as Turkey, Lebanon, Mesopotamia, and Egypt. To those, we will now add Ethiopia, but we will link them all together with one mysterious man called Enoch.

We're about to cover a large amount of territory, but it is well worth the effort. If the story that is about to unfold is based on even a modicum of historical accuracy rather than mythological allegory, Enoch could well prove

to be one of the most important men who ever lived.

Until 1777, all we knew about him was contained in a few enigmatic verses scattered throughout the Bible. In Genesis, he is briefly recognized as the seventh son of Jared and the father of Methuselah, the oldest man in the Bible, who died the very year God sent the great Flood that destroyed all humans except the family of Noah. According to the Bible, Enoch never died. Instead, he was “taken” before the Flood began.

No one is really sure what being “taken” means. The general idea is that because he was a righteous man, God sort of “beamed him up” so he would not be killed in the coming deluge. One day, he was here on Earth; the next day, he was gone, joining Moses and Elijah who, like Enoch, died either a mysterious death or no death at all. Although Enoch never showed up on Earth again, Moses and Elijah suddenly appeared in our dimension during the time of Jesus, when he was said to consult with them both on the Mount of Transfiguration about his coming death.

Evangelical Christians often use Enoch to symbolize what they call the “Rapture.” Just before the Flood, Enoch was taken bodily up to Heaven, there-by saving him from the coming judgment.

In Matthew 24:37, Jesus told his followers, “As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be at the coming of the Son of man.” Thus, according to evangelical theology, Enoch was a symbol of what will happen at the return of Jesus Christ. Christians will be taken—“raptured” is the word most used, even though it makes a verb out of a noun—before the final judgment, just as Enoch was.

Enoch is mentioned twice more in the Bible. In Hebrews 11:5, the verse used to begin this chapter, reference is made to his mysterious death. Jude 1:14 adds a bit of biography: “Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied: ‘See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones.’” In other words, Jude thought of Enoch as a Hebrew prophet.

Aside from these references, we wouldn’t know much about Enoch were it not for a few fortuitous texts that managed to evade local censors for a few thousand years, but to understand that, we need to talk a bit about the Dead Sea Scrolls.

In the book of Genesis, God is said to "take" Enoch into Heaven, which has been interpreted to mean that Enoch did not die but was, basically, raptured.

Technically, they're called the Qumran Cave Scrolls because that's where they were found back in 1946. The Qumran caves are located a little over a mile inland from the Dead Sea in the area now called the West Bank. Back in the time of Jesus, they were home to a group of Jewish conservatives called the Essenes.

They were hardcore fanatics who didn't want to mix with the "liberals"

in Jerusalem. They thought it might taint them. They lived in the desert in order to purify themselves while they awaited the coming of the Messiah. Some think that John the Baptist studied with them. The Gospels say he lived "in the desert" until he walked onto the stage of history by administering the most famous baptism of all time—so it could be true. The old guy was certainly tough enough as well as being a bit of a fanatic himself.

The Essenes had amassed a big library of scrolls and believed strongly that YHVH (these days translated as either THE LORD or Yahweh or Jehovah), the God of Light, was someday going to defeat the god of darkness —the one we now call the Devil. With them, everything was black and white, light and dark, good and evil, right and wrong. Very little middle ground existed. Today, we call it a theology of Dualism. You are either "for us or against us"!

In the year 70 C.E., a little less than forty years after Jesus had been crucified (which, by the way, didn't register on the Essenes' radar), Titus and the Roman legions showed up to burn Jerusalem to the ground and pretty much teach any Jews in the immediate vicinity a lesson about who was really in charge of their country, at least as far as earthly matters were concerned.

The Essenes didn't worry too much about their own deaths. They were willing to become martyrs for the cause. Whatever happened to them simply fulfilled prophecy as far as they were concerned, but they didn't want their library destroyed, so they carefully placed the scrolls in clay jars and hid them in caves way up in the mountains. There, the forgotten texts sat undisturbed until a Bedouin boy discovered some of them in 1946 while searching for lost sheep.

Understand, now, that those clay jars were hidden for almost two thousand years! In that time, much of what they contained decayed and was lost forever. Back then, everything was copied by hand. If you lost a scroll here and a parchment there, eventually, nobody was left alive who remembered what had once been commonplace. The stuff that remained is pretty much what we have today in our Bible. The texts survived because they were translated over and over again, and many copies were made.

It's tempting to think that what believers hear in church on Sunday morning comes straight from the lips of Jesus and Paul, but that's simply not the case. They're hearing a translation made from a copy of an older copy that came from another translation written way back before English

developed. It's impossible to know how much could have changed after so many translations and copies, given the time involved. Even scholars make mistakes, and back then, nobody had heard of spell-check.

Now, though, with the Qumran discovery, scholars had at their disposal ancient copies of the texts that made up the Old Testament. They were more than two thousand years old, waiting to be compared to what we read today.

The most amazing discovery to come out of the recovery of the scrolls is that most of what is recorded in the Old Testament is spot on! In almost every case, the Dead Sea Scrolls verify that what we read today is amazingly close to what they read back then.

Here's what's most interesting. Many books didn't get put into the Bible. The committee who made the decisions didn't feel that some of these books were "worthy" to make the cut. In other words, some of the old scrolls didn't agree with what the committee heads believed back then, so the scholars just saved what they liked and deep-sixed the rest.

Tradition says that this happened in the first century after Christ in a town called Jamnia. How I would love to go back in time to that town and peek in the wastebasket! What would I find? That's just Old Testament—the New Testament has its own story.

The Dead Sea Scrolls allow us to go back and see what the old-timers were reading and what eventually got thrown out. Parts of our modern Old Testament were discovered at Qumran, for sure, but much more existed, such as copies of parts of the books that the Jamnia committee knew about but discarded.

Here's the valuable part. They may have destroyed their rejects back in the first century, but they had no idea that copies of those rejects were buried up in the hills outside of Jerusalem so that two thousand years later, academics could judge their work.

One such surviving remnant that didn't make the biblical cut was a fragment of a text that has since been called *A Genesis Apocryphon*. That's just another way of saying it's an alternate version of the book of Genesis so familiar to us today. All that survived the centuries underground was a short section of the book that told about the birth of Lamech's son, gave an account of Noah's Flood, and described the travels of Abraham, the patriarch.

Part of the Dead Sea Scrolls maintained at a museum at Qumran. One reason the scrolls are important is that they reveal that the Bible has not changed much over the years. Also, they include writings not found in the Bible.

It was the part about Lamech that figures prominently in the journeys of Enoch.

In Genesis chapter 5 is a long list of what used to be called the “begats”: “So-and-so was (however) many years old when he begat a son called (whatever). He lived to be (so many) years old and then he died.”

It’s not exactly riveting stuff, but they teach us that Lamech was the grandson of a man named Enoch, who was the son of Methuselah, the oldest man who ever lived. Enoch was the father of none other than Noah himself.

Enoch, Lamech’s grandfather, was a mystery man. Every other person listed in Genesis chapter 5 died a natural death, even if that death came about after an unnaturally long life, but not Enoch. After he had done his duty and had a child, “He walked with God for three hundred years … then he was no more, for God took him.”

In other words, Enoch seems to have lived a long life and then said, “Okay, God, beam me up!”—and he “was taken,” whatever that means.

Then came Lamech’s father, Methuselah, who lived for 969 years and died in the very year of Noah’s Flood.

Finally, we come to Lamech. Apparently, two people in the Bible were named Lamech. In Genesis 4, a man named Lamech is said to have been a

descendant of Cain, the first murderer. This Lamech was the first bigamist. The Bible carefully points out that he took two wives.

The Lamech of chapter 6, however, is said to be related to Adam and Eve through their son Seth. He was the father of Noah and was said to have lived for 777 years.

Now with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, scholars first encountered a real mystery. They found a two-thousand-year-old fragment of a non-biblical book that no one had read since it was buried in the desert. It mentioned Lamech, but which Lamech was it talking about?

It seemed to be the one in chapter 6, the father of Noah. It recounted his surprise when he saw his soon-to-be famous sailor son for the first time. Here's what he said:

> Behold, I thought then within my heart that [his] conception was [due] to the Watchers and the Holy Ones … and to the Nephilim … and my heart was troubled within me because of this child.

Here, Lamech seems to be accusing his wife of having an affair with a member of a group called the "Watchers and the Holy Ones." These were identical to the group called Anunnaki, who fathered a race of giants called Nephilim.

Where did Lamech get the idea that his wife had been having sex behind his back with an angel? For that matter, can angels even have sex, let alone with humans? What would the mechanics be like?

If that wasn't enough, what about Lamech mentioning "the Nephilim"?

Here, again, is a mystery. The Bible says that the reason God brought about Noah's Flood was that "the *sons of God* saw that the *daughters of men* were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose." The results of these sexual liaisons were called Nephilim.

The children of these illicit affairs were said to be "giants." In Genesis 6:4, they were called "heroes of old, men of renown." That's why God destroyed the world.

> The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become … he was grieved that he had made man on the earth … and said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth."

—Genesis 6:5

Now it gets confusing. The Bible goes on to say that Noah would be spared because he had “found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”

After two thousand years, though, here was an old, old book about Lamech accusing his wife of being one of those women who had an affair with a “Watcher and a Holy One,” aka “angel,” aka “son of god,” aka Anunnaki, who had seen her as nothing less than one of the beautiful “daughters of men”! In other words, Noah, who “found grace in the eyes of the Lord,” now appears to be one of the very offspring who caused God to destroy Earth in the first place.

Why did Lamech accuse his wife of having an affair with an angel? Because the child looked like a Nephilim, a giant!

Who did this child turn out to be? None other than old Admiral Noah himself!

Was Noah really a product of a union between an “angel” and a human? Did he descend from what nowadays we might call an ancient alien or an entity from a parallel dimension? If so, the implications are staggering.

Remember, now, that Noah was said to be the father of every human now living. He and his sons were God’s do-over. Everyone else was destroyed in the Flood.

If Noah is your “father,” then, and he was part angel and part human, or part ancient alien, or even a spiritual entity of some kind, what does that make you?

You are a child of the gods!

In other words, people who lived thousands of years ago believed that we are descended from something other than earthly apes! These folks lived side by side, and were presumably just as smart as, the venerated folks who wrote the Bible we so revere today. They all wrote books, but we haven’t been allowed to read all of them because two thousand years ago, some unknown academic types from Jamnia decided what was true and what was false. They preserved what they considered to be the good stuff and burned the rest.

In one of the books in the Dead Sea Scrolls there is a story of Noah's father accusing his wife of bearing a child that was half angel, or Annunaki. Could Noah have been a human/angel half-breed?

That explains some pretty strange and enigmatic Bible verses. Psalm 82 says: "Know ye not that ye are gods?" Jesus even quotes that verse in John, chapter 10.

Speaking of Jesus, the acknowledged Son of God himself, he refers to his followers as "brothers" (and, one assumes in these more enlightened days, "sisters"). These verses, and many more like them, are echoes from the destroyed texts that might have changed the history of religion!

The common way of explaining these things, which are now well known to scholars but rarely brought up in lay circles, is to say: "Don't take these

things too seriously. Quacks and imaginative, superstitious people were around back then just as they are now. After all, Noah's Flood was an early Hebrew myth, composed to convey some mysterious ethical or moral lesson. These people were much more primitive than you give them credit for."

Why all this detail, though? You don't need to insert a lot of extraneous facts if you just want to convey an "ethical or moral lesson." As a matter of fact, too much extra material just clutters up your point. If you're trying to teach a moral lesson and your audience is thinking about Lamech's reaction to seeing his firstborn son—a future hero named Noah—they might even miss the whole message, so why bring it up?

These texts were written long before the birth of Jesus, and so were the texts that now make up the book of Genesis. Both Hebrews and Jude in the New Testament were written after his death. From this, we can deduce that the authors of Jude and Hebrews must have been familiar with at least one manuscript, long since disappeared, that told Enoch's story. Since no such manuscript was known to exist until recently, scholars assumed that as far as Enoch was concerned, his story would forever remain a mystery—one of those puzzling verses that pointed to an unknown and long-forgotten historical footnote.

Then, in 1773, long before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, an English scholar named James Bruce went to Ethiopia on a research trip. Three years later, he returned with a copy of *The Book of Enoch.* Somehow, the old book had made its way there, where it had been translated into Ge'ez, the sacred language of Ethiopia.

This is not as strange as it may seem at first glance. Ethiopia has ancient ties with Israel going back to the time of King Solomon. Even today, a sect there claims that it guards the long-lost Ark of the Covenant.

According to *The Book of Enoch* itself, during the reign of King Manasseh of Judah (695–642 B.C.E.), a falling away from the true faith occurred. Manasseh erected altars to both Baal and Asherah in Solomon's Temple. These were both Canaanite gods that the Jews had been instructed to cast down. Both Kings and Chronicles in the Old Testament confirm this episode. In 2 Kings 21:16, we read that "so much innocent blood was shed that it filled Jerusalem from end to end." Legend has it that at this time, faithful Jewish patriots left the country, taking the Ark of the Covenant and many important religious texts with them.

After a brief sojourn in Egypt, the refugees continued south all the way to Lake Tana in Ethiopia. This wasn't far from the source of the Nile. There, the refugees thought they would finally be safe from discovery. Today, the descendants of these people are called Falasha. They still practice an ancient form of Judaism that had not been known in Israel since 620 B.C.E.

Scottish travel writer James Bruce (1730–1794) journeyed to Ethiopia, where he found *The Book of Enoch.*

One of the texts that had been secreted out of Jerusalem was *The Book of Enoch*. It was soon translated into Ge'ez and faithfully guarded. Although the Hebrew versions had disappeared, a substantial portion had survived in Greek and some parts in Aramaic.

Until Bruce returned from his time in Ethiopia, no western scholars had ever seen the whole book. Even after it had been translated and made available, only academic scholars showed any interest in it. After all, *The Book of Enoch* was not included in what Christians now call the Old Testament of the Bible, what Jews call *Tanakh*—the official version of the

Hebrew Scriptures. It wasn't considered worthy enough by the committee who put the Bible together, but the original authors of Genesis must have known about it because they did include the short verses about Enoch quoted at the beginning of this entry. Those who compiled the New Testament had obviously read it because they quoted it. Both Jesus and Paul had obviously read it because it was considered part of the Bible of their day. Therefore, copies of it must have been available to first-century writers, but the texts had disappeared.

Now, however, the book has been given new life largely because popular authors such as Erich von Däniken, author of the popular *Chariots of the Gods?*, the book that sparked the modern ancient aliens theory, see in it alien visitation in the distant past.

When we read *The Book of Enoch* in modern English, casting aside all preconceived ideas about religious texts, and ask if a historical Enoch might have once lived, a compelling story emerges. Enoch takes on the guise of an ancient shaman who was a visionary. During his shamanic out-of-body journeys, he claims to have come into contact with spirit figures who, presumably, dwell in parallel realms. Using the vocabulary of his time and place, he refers to them as angelic beings.

According to *The Book of Enoch*, one night, Enoch had what sounds exactly like a typical shamanic out-of-body experience. He was given advance notice that a coming flood was going to destroy Earth. This deluge is found in the epic mythology of many different cultures. Here is one of the most familiar as it appears in the Bible:

> When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years."
>
> The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. So the LORD said, "I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the

> animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.
>
> —Genesis 6:1-9

This story is also found in the Quran of Islam, but there, Enoch's name is Idris. Islamic tradition also links Idris/Enoch with Hermes, the god of the Greek pantheon. According to the Persian philosopher Abu Mashar:

> The name Hermes is a title. Its first bearer, who lived before the Flood, was he whom the Hebrews call Enoch, whose name in Arabic is Idris.…

Now we have Enoch/Idris/Hermes: one man links together three civilizations.

According to Tamara Green in *The City of the Moon God*, he was also apparently a very capable astronomer:

> He wrote many books, whose wisdom he preserved on the walls of Egyptian temples lest it be lost. It was he who constructed the pyramids.

Now we have to add a fourth civilization—that of Egypt. The plot takes a sudden turn.

In the Temple of Horus at Edfu on the west bank of the Nile exists a series of inscriptions called the Edfu Building Texts. For the most part, they are the victims of extreme weathering due to their age, but from transcriptions and etchings, a story emerges.

In the very remote past called the Early Primeval Age of the Gods or *Zep Tepi,* the gods were not Egyptian. Instead, they came from somewhere called the Homeland of the Primeval Ones, which was a sacred island in the midst of the ocean. A long time prior to the texts being carved, the island, upon which "the earliest mansions of the gods" had once stood, was destroyed in a great cataclysm. Those who survived the catastrophe set forth in their great ships to "wander" the world in order to bring about "the resurrection of the former world of the gods." Their mission, in other words, was to recreate their destroyed world.

Here's where Enoch enters the picture. According to the texts, he was the inventor of writing. Besides that, he is said to have been afraid that the

secrets of the “art of building” were going to be destroyed in the great Flood that was to come. Because he had received advance warning, he wrote them down on a stone that he buried “in the bowels of the earth.”

Those who carved the Edfu Texts did not invent the building secrets of the art of building. They specifically say they “copied” them. In other words, we are talking about a tradition that was passed down through time. For this reason, to this day, Enoch figures prominently in the Freemason tradition of ancient builders.

Let’s start to synthesize some of this. Enoch now appears to be a carrier of the building tradition that was known in both Egypt and Mesopotamia as well as other places around the world. Does his identification with Hermes tie the various locations together and reveal that they were all recipients of the same ancient tradition?

The Temple of Edfu in Egypt includes inscriptions that speak of Enoch and mentioning that he was the carrier of the secrets of the art of building.

When we looked at the temple complex at Göbekli Tepe, we discovered that as soon as this most ancient temple in the world was built, right after the global catastrophe of the flooding in the wake of the Younger Dryas and almost within sight of the traditional landing place of Noah’s Ark, it was deliberately buried, recalling the “stone that he (Enoch) then buried in the bowels of the earth.” Was this the work of Enoch/Idris/Hermes? Does Göbekli Tepe contain the secrets of “the art of building” tradition that was

copied and retained in the Edfu Texts?

Now the story starts to really heat up. Enoch seems concerned about two things in particular: first, that a great is flood coming. It's going to destroy a wisdom tradition that is thought to be a civilizing factor of humankind— that is, the secrets of building.

Second, it seems that this flood is coming because of what Enoch considers to be sin.

Being a Hebrew patriarch, he exhibits what, for his day, was a normal cultural prejudice that was also found in his descendants. The Old Testament patriarchs had an aversion to sex. Its practice was very strongly regulated in the book of Leviticus and other books of the law and led many otherwise exemplary leaders to their downfall. King David and Saul, for instance, were famous for defying accepted norms.

According to the Bible:

> The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward —when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.

According to *The Book of Enoch*, the "sons of God" were a group of fallen angels called Watchers. Their mission, it seems, was to "watch" humans. Enoch even provided some of their names: Azazel, Semjaza, Armen, Rumjal, Turel, Armaros, Danjal, and Kokabel.

These fallen angels were among the two hundred Watchers who "saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married them."

Those who believe the ancient alien theory say that the Watchers are beings from another planet.

Those who follow more of a supernatural belief system claim that they are entities from another dimension: that is to say, angels.

Yet another way to read the story is to say that these Watchers were really human beings of an advanced civilization, possibly even in the Atlantis tradition, who had been sent out to observe, and only observe, the Stone Age peoples of the Middle East, but like missionaries sometimes do, they had "gone native" and begun to marry the locals.

This is what drives Enoch over the edge. Whatever way you view this text, the practice of sex with foreigners of any kind upset Enoch, who was a

Jewish patriarch with typical Jewish Old Testament sensibilities.

In Abraham's time, long after Enoch was gone, Jews were forbidden to mix with non-Jews. That might have been because four thousand years earlier, the Watchers had set a bad example by mixing with the indigenous population.

The offspring of these unions were said to be pretty impressive physical specimens. They were called the Nephilim, and their offspring were even more famous. In Genesis 6:4, they were called "the heroes of old, the men of renown" and were said to be giants.

The term "Nephilim" is used in only one other place in the Bible. A story from the book of Numbers tells of the Israelites being camped on the banks of the Jordan ready to enter the Promised Land. They sent twelve spies across the river to spy out the countryside. After forty days and forty nights, the spies returned with a majority report and a minority report.

The minority report was delivered by a man named Caleb and the future hero of Judaism, Joshua. They recommended an attack.

However, the majority report carried the day. "Giants are in the land," they said. "Next to them, we look like grasshoppers!" The word they used that is translated as "giants" is Nephilim.

After a vote on both reports, Israel decided to follow the majority report. In doing so, they sentenced themselves to forty years of wandering in the desert.

As an interesting sidelight to this story, five hundred years later, when Israel needed a king, they chose David. He rose to fame and power when he used his slingshot to slay a giant named Goliath. Everyone knows that story. What is not so well known is that Goliath had four brothers. We read about them in 1 Chronicles, chapter 20. Were Goliath and his brothers descended from the Nephilim?

Whoever the Nephilim were, they seem to have lasted a long time in the land. Were they indeed the offspring of the Watchers and the "daughters of men"? Is that what upset Enoch so much?

he offspring of these unions were said to be pretty impressive physical specimens. They were called the Nephilim, and their

Toffspring were even more famous.

Whatever the reason, according to *The Book of Enoch*, the civilization that existed at that time ended because of a great flood. Is this an illusion to the comet "from heaven" that ended the Younger Dryas Ice Age, when fire and flood devastated much of Earth and the sea levels quickly rose? The biblical writers called it Noah's Flood. Other civilizations remembered it in different ways, but the common denominator was universal destruction. All the people in the world were affected. Many of them perished in the deluge.

According to Enoch, it was God's judgment.

The story doesn't end there, though. According to *The Book of Enoch*, the Watchers were being watched. Another group of angels existed with names such as Uriel, Raphael, Michael, and Gabriel. Again, we can read the story on different levels. Were they angels? Were they aliens? Were they human survivors sent out from a distant homeland to reign in the Watchers who had gotten out of hand?

Enoch doesn't say.

Whatever happened, it's undeniable that following the devastation, some huge changes were made. Right after the deluge, the temple complex at Göbekli Tepe was built. While there, people discovered the arts of agriculture. Somebody organized the hunter–gatherers who had survived the cataclysm into what we now call the Neolithic Revolution. That marked the beginning of our civilization. This led to writing and all sorts of civilized activity. The world has never been the same.

Graham Hancock in his book *The Magicians of the Gods* envisions these Watchers as members of an advanced civilization that, after the drastic floods of the Younger Dryas Ice Age Event destroyed their homeland, set out to rebuild. The Egyptian Edfu Texts tell the story. They settled in places with which they were already familiar. Having previously sent out cultural "missionaries," they migrated to Egypt, Turkey, Lebanon, and eventually to Central and South America.

Because Göbekli Tepe is so central to the Flood story, located as it is within shouting distance of the birthplace of Judaism, Abraham's hometown of Ur of the Chaldees, and the mountain where Noah's Ark came to rest, and

because it sits on the outskirts of the traditional location of the Garden of Eden, it makes us wonder whether Enoch, the Jewish patriarch, encountered real men after all, not gods, and that the myths have some historical significance. The stories of that encounter grew, no doubt, with the telling over the course of thousands of years, but when we read them with this insight, it breathes life into them.

In the end, it's a very human story about interracial sex, revolution, agriculture, urban planning, and even magic. It's laced with fire and flood, tragedy and hope. Through it all walks a man named Enoch. He journeyed far and wide, connected various cultures and civilizations, and figured prominently in the destruction of one civilization and the subsequent rise of our own. A man with many names, we read about him in Turkey, Lebanon, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Ethiopia. If a real, flesh-and-blood man ever existed who did even some of the deeds attributed to him, he must have cut quite a figure.

JOSEPH SMITH AND LOST CIVILIZATIONS OF THE AMERICAS

> I retired to a secret place in a grove, and began to call upon the Lord; while fervently engaged in supplication, my mind was taken away from the objects with which I was surrounded, and I was enwrapped in a heavenly vision, and saw two glorious personages, who exactly resembled each other in features and likeness, surrounded with brilliant light which eclipsed the sun at noon day.
>
> —Joseph Smith in *First Vision*

For four years in the late sixties during my college days, I was the choir director of a small Episcopal church in Palmyra, New York. After graduating in 1968, I lived there full-time while I held my first public school teaching job in a nearby town. It was there that I first came across the story told in the Book of Mormon, the central religious text of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

According to LDS (Latter-day Saints) doctrine, Joseph Smith discovered the original text of the scriptures on Palmyra's Hill Cumorah, a drumlin left by the last glacier that slowly receded from upper New York State ten

thousand years ago. The texts were purported to have been written on gold tablets in ancient times by a twenty-four-year-old man named Mormon who, before his death, passed them on to his son Moroni. Moroni was a general of a tribe called the Nephites and was the last survivor of a battle with the Lamanites. Before his death, he buried the plates on Cumorah. About 1,400 years later, Joseph Smith is said to have found and translated them.

I lived right below Hill Cumorah and often climbed to the top, which is now the scene of a great Mormon shrine and a magnificent statue. Every summer, the great Mormon outdoor pageant is held there, so I became familiar with the story.

According to church history, fourteen-year-old Joseph Smith became caught up in one of the many religious revivals that swept through the area. He prayed to God to let him know which church to join.

Palmyra is famous because the book *Ripley's Believe It or Not* once wrote it up due to having a different church on each of the four corners of its central square. On Sunday mornings, when my church service at the Episcopal church let out, the combined traffic from the Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians could sometimes prove troublesome, so I could identify with young Joseph's dilemma.

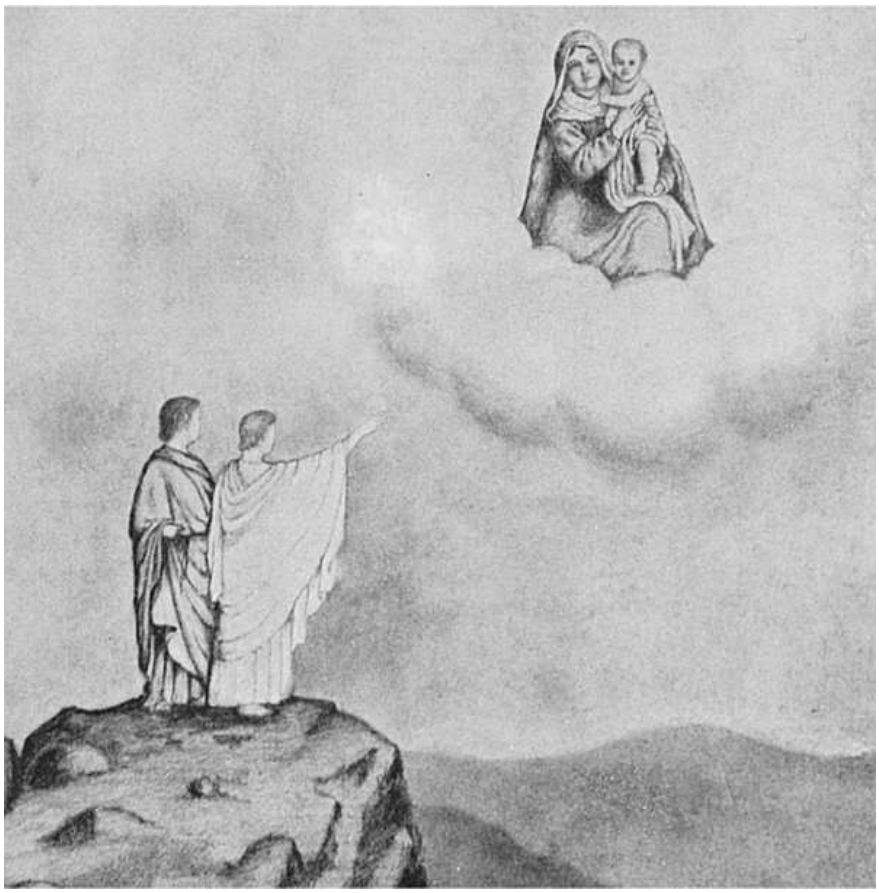
God's answer to Smith's prayer was that he shouldn't join any church but should instead wait for guidance. In his words, "I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me."

Seven years later, Moroni, now a resurrected angel, visited Smith and told him about the buried plates. He led Joseph to Hill Cumorah and revealed the hiding place. They were written in a language Smith called reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics, a language totally unknown to the young man, but he was given a pair of special spectacles that allowed him to read and translate the text. The result is called the Book of Mormon.

The story of the book begins with a Jewish prophet named Lehi, who lived in Jerusalem before the time of Christ. In true Jewish prophetic fashion, Lehi warned the sinners around him that they would be punished and destroyed if they didn't repent. So far, this was standard Old Testament stuff. Also typical was the fact that the people of Jerusalem paid no attention to the voice of the prophet. Instead, they threatened him.

Lehi escaped into the wilderness with his wife, Sariah, and his sons, Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi, taking with them the history of his people, which had been written on brass plates. Lehi's response was simple obedience: "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded."

Lehi, guided by a gift from God called a Liahona, a kind of compass, eventually came to the sea, where he was told to build a boat and sail to the Promised Land.



Nephi, the son of the prophet Lehi, sees the baby Jesus and Mother Mary in this illustration based on the Book of Mormon. The Nephites migrated to America, where they were later visited by Jesus.

Nephi obeyed his father. Laman and Lemuel did not. Their descendants came to be known as Lamanites. The descendants of Nephi became the Nephites. The Nephites were charged with continuing to keep the records originally begun on the plates they carried with them.

After many adventures in the new land, now thought to be the Americas, the wicked Lamanites eventually squared off with the righteous Nephites, but

before the end, a Lamanite prophet named Samuel prophesied that Jesus Christ would soon be born.

He was, indeed, born across the sea, back in the old country in a little town called Bethlehem. There he grew to manhood, healed and blessed the people, was crucified, and, three days later, rose from the dead.

However, he had left a message behind. “Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (John 10:16).

Joseph Smith was convinced that the “other sheep” were the descendants of Lehi in far-off America.

Sure enough, LDS doctrine teaches that after his resurrection in Jerusalem, Jesus appeared in the New World, carrying on the ministry he had begun in Jerusalem.

The story ties in the visit to Mesoamerica of Quetzalcoatl, a bearded stranger from across the sea, found in Olmec, Maya, and Inca oral history with the legends of a fierce battle way up north on the plain below Hill Cumorah. Some project these legends onto the Mound Building cultures of the Ohio Valley. To this day, although recent DNA evidence casts doubts, many Cherokee believe that they are descended from the lost tribes of Israel.

The lost New World civilizations called Nephites and Lamanites even lend their names to American history. The theory that American Indian tribes are descended from ancient Israelites used to be called the Lamanite theory and was popular well into the early twentieth century.

That being said, do any facts substantiate the theory that ancient civilizations from Israel populated the New World of the Americas, including another theme in The Book of Mormon that the Americas also became the home of the Jaredite civilization after the events related in the biblical stories about the breakup of humankind following the confounding of languages at the Tower of Babel?

Initially, archaeologists were quick to point out discrepancies in the story. Especially popular were anachronistic arguments. Certain domesticated animals such as horses, cattle, sheep, and swine are all mentioned, but archaeological evidence seems to indicate that these animals were not yet raised during the time frames given in the texts.

Mormon scholars, of course, counter these arguments with their own claims, but in general, the so-called Lamanite theory has been discredited in academic circles.

Likewise, certain technologies such as chariots seem out of place given the fact that Mesoamerican civilizations had not yet invented the wheel, and the swords used by the armies of Lamanites and Nephites were said to have rusted with age. Iron wasn't known in the Americas until much later.

Barley and wheat appear in the Book of Mormon, but they weren't introduced to the Americas until after 1492.

Mormon scholars, of course, counter these arguments with their own claims, but in general, the so-called Lamanite theory has been discredited in academic circles. Typically, anyone who even brings it up is ostracized in any academic discussion. They bring up the "magic glasses," Joseph Smith's reluctance to show the public the golden plates he translated, their eventual "disappearance," the lack of witnesses except for a few carefully chosen, trusted elders, and the reluctance on the part of the LDS church to allow any excavations on Hill Cumorah to see if they can unearth any artifacts left from the last great war that was said to have taken place there, let alone bones from the thousands of warriors said to have died in that battle.

I have to confess that on most days, I tend to side with the archaeologists and naysayers. It's a pretty fantastic story, I admit. Having lived at the base of Hill Cumorah and climbed it many times to sit at the top and meditate, surrounded by peace and quiet, it seems a landscape far removed from the clash and clang of battle and historical struggle.

However, I have one problem with wholly accepting the academic point of view. Unlike most Mormon detractors, I've both read and studied the text in question.

I'm a pretty educated guy. I've had a lot more schooling than Joseph Smith. Having lived in his town, studied his history, and visited each and every one of his old houses, sacred groves, and haunts, I'll put myself, my experience, and my background up against his any day. As a former college professor who taught world religions and written a dozen books, some of

them pretty scholarly, I'd be glad to debate him about any subject involving either religion or history. I'm pretty confident that I could come out on top of any argument with him on these subjects.

I've read the Book of Mormon, and I know in my heart of hearts that I could never have written it. Without spiritual help of some kind, I wonder how he did.

QUETZALCOATL AND THE ANCIENT GODS

> Although the story varies between different Mesoamerican cultures, Quetzalcoatl was considered the god of the morning star, and his twin brother Xoloti was the evening star (Venus). He was the inventor of books, the calendars, presenter of maize (corn), and sometimes the symbol of death and resurrection. He was also related to the gods of the wind, the dawn, of merchants, arts, and crafts. He was the patron god of the Aztec priesthood, of learning and knowledge. He went to the underworld and created mankind of the fifth-world (present world). Wind, fire, and earthquakes destroyed humankind in the four previous worlds. According to Aztec legend this happened because these beings did not worship the gods.
>
> —Sandra Weaver

At various times throughout this book, we've referred to the legends about Quetzalcoatl, the mysterious visitor/god remembered in Mesoamerican mythology. It's time to pull these legends together and ask some pertinent questions. First of all, it will be helpful to remember him in the context of how we first met him.

In the Mesoamerican history and religious systems:

> He is remembered as *'era Hombre blanco,* a large, white man with a flowing beard. Like Viracocha to the west and south, he wore a long, white robe, condemned the sacrifices that polluted the people, taught them how to use proper cooking fires, and showed them how to "live together as husband and wife." He arrived from the sea "in a boat that moved without paddles" and "taught the people how to live in peace." When he was eventually rebuffed by a local group

> who felt threatened by his message, he departed, sailing away "toward the rising Sun."
>
> The final message of both peacekeepers was the same, however: "I'll be back."

According to numerous scholars who are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints:

> LDS doctrine teaches that after his resurrection in Jerusalem, Jesus indeed appeared in the New World, carrying on the ministry he had begun in Jerusalem.
>
> The story ties in the visit to Mesoamerica of Quetzalcoatl, a bearded stranger from across the sea, found in Olmec, Maya, and Inca oral history with the legends of a fierce battle way up north on the plain below Hill Cumorah. Some project these legends onto the Mound Building cultures of the Ohio Valley. To this day, although recent DNA evidence casts doubts, many Cherokee believe that they are descended from the lost tribes of Israel.

Now instead of concentrating on what Quetzalcoatl did, we're going to search for the lost civilization from whence he came. In other words, we're going to assume that the legends concerning the great god of Mesoamerica are augmented, historical memories of an actual, flesh-and-blood, ancient person who came from somewhere, accomplished great things, and then departed, leaving a religion in his wake. He may not have been a god, but he was remembered as one.

The Temple of the Feathered Serpent in Xochicalco, Mexico, depicts Quetzalcoatl in the god's typical form as a feathered serpent, but he is sometimes shown in other forms and looking more like a human being.

First, his name.

Gods accumulate many names as the years go by. "Quetzalcoatl" comes from two Nahuatl words. That's the language of the Aztec. "Quetzal" is the name of the emerald plume bird. "Coatl" means "serpent." Hence, in English, he is called the "plumed" or "feathered" serpent, but to the Maya, he was Kukulkán. The Quiché of Guatemala called him Gucumatz. We don't know what the Olmec called him, but the image of a feathered serpent is found on one of the La Venta Monuments. To the Teotihuacan civilization, he became a vegetarian god closely related to Tlaloc, the god of rain. By the time of the Toltec, he was transformed into the god of the morning. His twin brother was Xoloti, the evening star, represented in the heavens as the planet Venus. During this period, he was known as the protector of craftsmen, especially goldsmiths. He watched over all who were involved with science, the arts, and agriculture. He was the inventor of the famous Maya calendar and discovered maize, or corn, a staple of regional agriculture. To help out the growing of crops in an arid land, he became the bringer of rain.

Most importantly, though, Quetzalcoatl was the creator. He was one of the four sons of Tonacatecuhtli and Tonacacihuatl, the original creator gods. It was through Quetzalcoatl and his brother, Tezcatlipoca, that the original act

of creation was carried out.

In some versions of the stories, the two brothers often fought. This caused the building up and destruction of several successive ages. During the First Age, for instance, Quetzalcoatl attacked Tezcatlipoca with a stone club. Tezcatlipoca became so angry that he ordered his beloved jaguars to kill all the people and devour them. Things like this happened at least four times. We are now living in the Fifth Age.

Strangely, although Mexico and Peru are separated by almost 3,000 miles (5,000 kilometers), Quetzalcoatl shares much in common with Viracocha, the creator god of the Inca. Neither is said to have features similar to the native people of either area. Both have beards, for instance. Both have white skin. It's hard to figure out why this should be unless some historical piece is missing from the mythological puzzle.

The mystery deepens when we compare both gods to the gods of ancient Sumer, Egypt, and India. In all these mythologies, we find the story of a cataclysm, a flood, a destruction, and a rebuilding of civilization by a mythical, ancient god and his cohorts. In Sumer, it was the Anunnaki. In Egypt, it was a committee from afar who brought civilization at the time of the *Zep Tepi*. In India, it was Manu and the Seven Sages. In Peru, it was Viracocha. In Mexico, it was Quetzalcoatl and his helpers. All brought civilization to the indigenous people. All are depicted wearing "fish-garbed" uniforms, and all are pictured carrying what author Graham Hancock delightfully calls a "man-bag"-type briefcase of some kind—perhaps a sign or tool of a sacred office. They all have blue eyes, long beards, and hair, either white or red, mustaches, and are remembered as being very tall.

Ceramic Moche vessels from Peru depict a man with a white beard possibly representing Viracocha. There are stories all over South and Central America about a god with white skin and

a white beard who is a creator deity.

The people of Mesoamerica were a dark-skinned people and usually were not particularly tall, so why are the gods remembered with unfamiliar, atypical features unless for a historical reason? Maybe they actually looked like that.

Then, of course, is the promise to return. Many ancient gods have left and promised to return. Jesus is probably the most famous, but others existed. What does that mean if it is not to be taken at face value?

For these reasons and many more, theories abound about the real, historical identity of Quetzalcoatl and the gods who share similarities with him.

Some believe them to be representatives of the alien Anunnaki from Mesopotamia. When they brought the gift of civilization to Sumer, Egypt, and their environs, the Anunnaki also visited Mesoamerica, where they bestowed the same gift. That explains the similarities in stone architecture and building techniques, not the least of which are the very similar pyramids. It explains the overlap of certain words in different languages. The Hopi words *anu* and *naki*, for instance, when put together, mean "ant friends" or "ant people."

That also explains the promise to return. We mentioned earlier that the Anunnaki came from their home planet, Nibiru:

> The late Zecharia Sitchin insisted that the name Anunnaki didn't mean "gods of heaven and Earth." He said it was better translated as "those who from heaven to Earth came." He even located their home world on a planet named Nibiru, which he claimed comes within traveling distance of Earth from time to time as it follows a long, elliptical orbit through the heavens. The inhabitants of Nibiru, he wrote, were in trouble. For some reason, their atmosphere needed to be seeded with gold from time to time in order to remain viable. As luck would have it, gold was plentiful on planet Earth, but in order to mine it in sufficient quantities the Nibiruans needed slaves, so with a little genetic DNA manipulation, the human race came to be, created, as it were, from lower life forms that already walked on Earth.
>
> If Nibiru indeed has a large enough orbit that it only comes around every

few thousand years, it would explain why Quetzalcoatl needed to catch a ride home and knew it would be quite a while before he could return. It would seem, moreover, that Mesoamerican gold has been in demand for a long time. That's what interested the Spanish, too.

We might even see another connection here. The Anunnaki are associated with the stars. Quetzalcoatl is associated with Venus. Maybe that's another clue.

Many people look for the lost civilization of Quetzalcoatl and the Mesoamerican gods closer to home. Their solution, however, is no less romantic. They wonder if he is a survivor from the lost civilization known as Atlantis, and they go further to speculate that perhaps Atlantis existed right next door to Mexico in the Caribbean.

Let's recall for a minute what we said about this hypothesis when we looked at the legends concerning Atlantis:

> Andrew Collins in his book *Atlantis in the Caribbean and the Comet That Changed the World* puts forth some compelling evidence that Atlantis was located in the Bahamas and the Caribbean and that Cuba may have been the capital of the island nation. It is his theory that at the time of the Younger Dryas comet impact some twelve thousand years ago, the island of Cuba was devastated, and parts of the Bahaman landmass in the Caribbean were submerged beneath the rising sea. Relating ancient myths and legends from the indigenous people of North, Central, and South America, including the Maya of Mesoamerica, the Quiché of Peru, the Yuchi of Oklahoma, the islanders of the Antilles, and the native peoples of Brazil, he believes that the comet that destroyed Atlantis in the Caribbean also formed the numerous elliptical depressions called Carolina Bays. They are found across the Carolinas and all the way down the eastern Atlantic coast.
>
> If his theory holds up to scrutiny, it explains the African features found on the giant stone heads in Mexico.
>
> It's a comprehensive theory that deserves more attention.

Could it be possible that Quetzalcoatl was, after all, an emissary from Atlantis? The dates don't work out very well. Plato puts the destruction of Atlantis back some 11,600 years. That's way too early for the Quetzalcoatl

myths, unless we surmise an Atlantean tradition rather than an Atlantis event. On the other hand, if Quetzalcoatl does go back that far, it certainly demands a rethinking of Mesoamerican history.

It's all interesting just the same. The myths give us more information than we need if they are only imaginative, religious legends, but they don't give us enough information to pinpoint them in time. Perhaps they are forever destined to join the long, mysterious thread that weaves through the mythological landscape of lost, ancient civilizations.

RAGNARÖK

> Someday—whenever the Norns, those inscrutable spinners of fate, decree it—there shall come a Great Winter unlike any other the world has yet seen. The biting winds will blow snows from all directions, and the warmth of the sun will fail, plunging the earth into unprecedented cold. This winter shall last for the length of three normal winters, with no summers in between. Mankind will become so desperate for food and other necessities of life that all laws and morals will fall away, leaving only the bare struggle for survival. It will be an age of swords and axes; brother will slay brother, father will slay son, and son will slay father.
>
> —From the Norse *Ragnarök: The Doom of the Gods*

In August 1876, the first complete performance of Richard Wagner's four-part opera cycle called *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, "The Ring of the Nibelung," was performed. Sometimes called the "Ring Cycle," it is a monumental work for a very large orchestra and a huge opera cast, requiring great strength and endurance to perform because the entire work lasts longer than 15 hours. The last opera in the cycle is called *Götterdämmerung*—The "Twilight" or the "Downfall" of the gods. That one lasts a mere 5 hours from downbeat to tragic finish.

Although Wagner takes quite a departure from the original Norse legend, *Götterdämmerung* tells the story of Ragnarök, the end of everything in the cosmos, including the gods. Although it ends in an ultimate cataclysm, the cosmos is recreated and a new beginning unfolds, similar to the Hindu belief of one universe arising from the ruins of its predecessor or the modern idea of the multiverse continuing to recreate universes in its own image.

Although the story takes place in the future, it helps to understand Viking beliefs, maybe even Viking behavior, in the past.

The future tragedy will begin when a fierce winter will take over the world. One winter will last longer than three normal winters, and it will be a lot colder. No summer will occur in between winters. The winds will blow from the four directions. People will become desperate for food, and even family members will kill each other in the competition to survive.

Skoll and Hati, the wolves that have hunted the Sun and Moon through the skies ever since time began, will finally catch their prey and feast. This will leave a great, black hole in the sky. Yggdrasil, the "world tree" that holds the cosmos together, will tremble, and all its leaves will fall off. The mountains will collapse in on themselves. Jormungand, the great serpent that lives at the bottom of the sea, will arise, bringing great waves of destruction with it. They will spill over the land as it comes ashore.

All this will shake free the ship *Naglfar* from its moorings. *Naglfar* is made from the fingernails and toenails of the dead and is crewed by an army of giants. Its captain is Loki, traitor to the gods, now freed from the chains that have bound him since his act of betrayal.

The fire giants will arise and march forth into battle. Odin himself will lead the opposing forces of good, even though he knows that the prophecies have predicted the end. The final battle will take place on the plains of Vigrid.

Odin will fight Fenrir, and by his side will be the Einherjar, the armies of Odin's selected human warriors who have been waiting in Valhalla for this very moment. They will fight more valiantly than anyone has ever fought before, but even their heroics will not be sufficient to forestall the end. Fenrir will swallow Odin and all his men. Only one of Odin's sons, Vidar, will charge the beast to avenge his father. On his feet will be shoes that have been handcrafted just for this purpose. They have been made from all the scraps of leather that human shoemakers have ever discarded. With one of these shoes, Vidar will hold open the monster's mouth. Then he will stab his sword through the wolf's throat, killing him.

In the end, the world will sink into the sea, and nothing will be left but the void. Creation will be undone.

Some say that's the end of the tale, but others disagree. They believe

that a bright and shining new world will arise out of the waters. A few of the gods will survive the downfall. Two of them, Thor's sons Modi and Magni, will go on to live a joyous life in the new world.

A man and woman named Líf and Líf̨rasir, the Adam and Eve of the new creation, will have hidden themselves from the destruction in the Wood of Hoddmímis Holt and will come forth to populate the new world. A new sun will rise in the sky. Things will begin again.

That's the story; now, what does it all mean?

An 1882 illustration of Ragnarök titled "Battle of the Doomed Gods" shows Odin, Thor, and the other Norse deities battling the beasts in a war that will end the entire universe.

Pretend for a moment that you are a Viking of old. Daniel McCoy, in his penetrating book *The Viking Spirit: An Introduction to Norse Mythology and Religion*, points out that every Viking was taught from birth that the world in which they lived was going to be obliterated. Even the gods were doomed to die. Not even memories will survive. How would that knowledge affect you? In McCoy's words:

> How does such a world look to you in the present moment, given that the seeds of that final destruction have already been sown, and the world is careening inexorably toward that final decisive moment? Would this not cast a dark hue of tragedy, senselessness, and futility over the world and everything that occurs within it? Indeed, it's hard to escape the conclusion that this was how the

Vikings saw the world on one level.

This explains how Viking “berserker” warriors could go so willingly into battle, almost hoping for death. It explains how they could sail into unknown seas and command such awful respect. It explains how they could endure stoically such a difficult lifestyle.

Probably, the weather didn’t help much, either, but Viking war technology changed the world. Their long ships could, and did, sail almost anywhere and everywhere. New vistas opened to them, so they also found some hope in the old tale:

> In addition to being a prophecy about the future that revealed much about the underlying nature of the world along the way, the myth of Ragnarök also served as a paradigmatic model for human action. For the Vikings, the tale didn’t produce hopelessness as much as inspiration and invigoration. Just as the gods will one day die, so too will each individual human being. And just as the gods will go out and face their fate with dignity, honor, and courage, so too can humans. In this view, the inevitability of death and misfortune should not paralyze us, but should instead spur us to hold noble attitudes and do noble deeds—the kind worthy of being recounted by bards many generations after we ourselves are gone.

The two versions of the Ragnarök are interesting as well. In one, the world ends in darkness and despair. It is a totally pagan tale. In the other, a new creation comes forth out of the chaos of destruction. That seems to be a newer, updated telling of the tale.

McCoy argues that the second version came after the Vikings had been at least somewhat Christianized. Maybe, just maybe, it helps to explain why the Viking threat eventually lessened and a new civilization came forth to populate the British Isles and places as far removed as Iceland, Greenland, and perhaps even North America.

Which is the true version of the Ragnarök legend?

Only time will tell.

Amazon Warriors

As Princess Diana is of Themyscira, Wonder Woman is of

> Amazonian blue-blood. Formed from clay by her mother, Queen Hippolyta, and given life by the breath of Aphrodite, she is a demi-god. The gifts she receives from the gods of the Greek pantheon explain her superhero powers, which become evident when she transforms into Wonder Woman.…
>
> Overwhelming evidence now shows that the Amazon traditions of the Greeks and other ancient societies derived in part from historical facts.
>
> —Adrienne Mayor in *The Amazons: Lives and Legends of Warrior Women across the Ancient World*

We know their names, even though up until recently, only the romantics among us believed in their existence: Thessalia, Hippolyta, Antiope, and yes, even Princess Diana of Themyscira, better known as Wonder Woman. They are Amazons, women warriors who were given mythological immortality by the Greeks. Every Greek warrior, from Hercules on down, had to prove his mettle by going up against an Amazon and emerging victorious from the battle. It was a rite of passage.

No one really believed they ever existed, though. Until now.

Adrienne Mayor, in her wonderful book *The Amazons: Lives and Legends of Warrior Women across the Ancient World*, has drawn attention to recent archaeological discoveries that seem to prove, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that Amazons existed and may have been every bit as fierce as their reputations suggested.

While excavating Scythian burial mounds, archaeologists routinely uncovered evidence of kurgans—nomadic, horse-centered warriors—including human bones found from the Black Sea to the steppes of Mongolia. To fight from horseback, you need a different weapon technology. The bows have to be shorter and more powerful in order to shoot arrows on the run over the head of your mount. Bows and arrows are regularly found in burial mounds. It was just assumed that their owners were male warriors.

Now, though, the science of DNA testing has become a regular tool in the archaeologist’s arsenal and, as it turns out, at least one-third of the bodies found were those of women warriors.

That makes sense. On horseback, a trained female warrior can be just as deadly as a male warrior and maybe even prove to be a little faster and more

maneuverable due to the lighter weight the horse has to carry. Along with bows and arrows were found knives and daggers. Again, speed is more important than bulk when using weapons such as these.

Archaeologists call them Scythian burial sites because that's what the Greeks called them. Scythians roamed the area north and east of the Mediterranean Sea and were a feared and respected people, but history prefers the name Amazon for reasons that have nothing to do with geography.

The Greek historian Hellanikos, way back in the fifth century B.C.E., made a linguistic mistake that has been repeated innumerable times since. It is now so common that no one really thinks about it. The word *mazon* sounds like a Greek word meaning "breast." The prefix *a* signifies "lack." Therefore, at least according to popular history, *Amazon* means "without breast." This was a reference to the fact that old Hellanikos thought that Amazon warriors cut off their left breast so it wouldn't interfere with the act of drawing and firing a bow and arrow. This is patently ridiculous, of course. Female archers today have no problem shooting a bow, and the word "Amazon" probably isn't even Greek in the first place. It's most likely Iranian, or even Caucasian, but once a titillating concept takes hold in popular imagination, it's hard to shake it. I'm sure that Lynda Carter, the actress who portrayed Wonder Woman, the Amazon princess, on the television series was glad that the producers didn't take the legend too literally.

Another popular misconception, no doubt fueled by modern sexual mores, was that Amazons were lesbians who only captured men so as to produce the next generation of warriors.

Here again, history just doesn't stand up to legend. The Greeks had no trouble at all when it came to conducting open and honest discussions about sexuality, and absolutely no suggestion exists in antiquity that the Scythian warriors were antimale or male-hating lesbians, as popular mythology asserts.

Adrienne Mayor points out that she did discover:

> … a vase that shows a Thracian huntress giving a love gift to the Queen of the Amazons, Penthesilea. That's a strong indication that at least someone thought of the idea of a love affair between Amazons. But just because we don't have any written evidence, and only that one unique vase, doesn't preclude that Amazons might have had relations with each other. It's just that it has nothing to do with the ancient idea of Amazons.

Apparently, the whole lesbian/Amazon connection began with Marina Tsvetaeva, a Russian poet. She believed that Amazons were symbolic of lesbianism in antiquity. The idea grew from there, probably because it piqued male interest.

A c. 470 B.C.E. Greek vase with an image of an Amazon warrior. The Amazons were a tribe related to the Scythians who lived north of the Black Sea.

The Greek historian Herodotus told the story of Scythian warriors sitting around a fire and throwing plants or seeds into the flames. Everyone became intoxicated when they inhaled the smoke. This sounds a lot like a pot party and may actually have some verifiable archaeological evidence. Every Scythian burial discovered so far, both male and female, contains a hemp-smoking kit, complete with a small charcoal brazier. Herodotus says that the people would build a small sauna tepee, go inside, light a fire, and get high.

They also drank fermented mare's milk. Mayor includes a recipe in her book but warns people not to attempt to make it at home.

Tattoos were big in Amazon circles. Both men and women sported them in abundance, usually geometric shapes or animal images. Tattoo kits are often found in Scythian burial sites.

Surprisingly, it was probably women who invented trousers. The idea of wearing pants can be traced in mythology back to Medea, either a sorceress or princess, maybe even both, from the Caucasus region. Both the Scythians and the Personas later adopted the concept. When you think about it, it makes sense. Trousers work better than robes when it comes to riding a horse. If these stories are true, men must henceforth credit the idea of wearing the pants in the family to women warriors. The Greeks thought trousers were an abomination, worn only by barbarians.

When you add up all these archaeological indications, it would appear that, as is so often the case, a kernel of history is at the core of the mythology surrounding the Amazons. This isn't a new concept, either. Amanda Formen, in the April 2014 edition of *Smithsonian* magazine, points out that in 1861, a Swiss law professor and classical scholar named Johann Jakob Bachofen published what was then a radical theory that the Amazons were not a myth but a historical fact. He wrote that humanity started out under the concept of matriarchy and switched to patriarchy at the beginning of civilization. Bachofen believed, however, that world domination by men was a necessary step toward progress. Women only understood what he called "the physical life." In his words, "The triumph of patriarchy brings with it the liberation of the spirit from the manifestations of nature."

For a guy who started out with a good idea, Bachofen really went off the rails very quickly. In his defense, he lived back in 1861, but still.…

In an earlier study of the Norse concept of Ragnarök, we mentioned the composer Richard Wagner's fascination with legends of the end times. He

showed an equal interest in Amazon warriors. Brünnhilde and her Valkyries are classic examples of Amazon warriors, so it doesn't come as a surprise that Wagner was a student of Bachofen's but so was Friedrich Engels. Bachofen was required reading for a whole generation of Marxist and feminist theorists. They wrote about a prepatriarchal age when "the evils of class, property and war were unknown." In Engels's words:

> The overthrow of mother-right was the world historical defeat of the female sex. The man took command in the home also; the woman was degraded and reduced to servitude; she became the slave of his lust and a mere instrument for the production of children.
>
> —Friedrich Engels in *Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*

Many today would agree with this sentiment, but unfortunately very little evidence exists that such a utopian matriarchy ever existed. Hints have been found in various archaeological sites around the world that societies did exist that demonstrated a much more balanced gender relationship than is usually the case, but as of now, the verdict is still out.

The idea of matriarchy still awaits historic reality, but the quest for gender balance might explain history's fascination for Amazon mythology. We'd like to think that the Amazons were more than just Scythian warriors who could ride and shoot a bow. At the same time, male titillation with female dominance adds another layer to a legend that goes all the way back in time to Homer's first mention of the Amazons in *The Iliad.* He called them *antianeirai,* which can be translated from the Greek as meaning anything from "antagonistic to men" to "the equal of men." No one knows for sure what he meant.

However, the legend took on an identity of its own. Amazon warriors were said to have fought in the battle for Troy on the side of the Trojans. The Greek hero Achilles took on Penthesilea, an Amazon queen, and killed her in a single combat. Hercules's ninth task was to steal a magic girdle from the Amazon queen Hippolyta. Athens could not arise until the brave Greek warriors had defeated the Amazon hordes, a result, by the way, that hereafter justified the subjugation of women in Greek society. Plutarch, a Greek historian, later recorded these words:

The Greek hero Achilles defeats the Amazonian queen Penthesilea in this c. 400 B.C.E. marble frieze. Amazons represented in many ways the equality of women being eventually crushed by male dominance.

> The Amazons "were no trivial nor womanish enterprise for Theseus. For they would not have pitched their camp within the city, nor fought hand-to-hand battles in the neighborhood of the Pynx and the Museum, had they not mastered the surrounding country and approached the city with impunity." As ever, though, Athenian bravery saved the day.

It's probably no accident that Greek depictions of heavily armored Greek warriors fighting scantily clad Amazon warriors was repeated down through history. In an epic battle scene from the 2004 movie *King Arthur*, Arthur, played by Clive Owen, and his Knights of the Round Table go to battle against the invading Saxon hordes. They are dressed head to toe in heavy metal armor. Guinevere, played by Keira Knightley, fights right alongside them—a personification of the prototypical Amazon warrior. She, however, is wearing a bikini. Even Wonder Woman wore more clothes than that.

The legend of the Amazon warriors has to be listed alongside mythologies of lost civilizations. Did they ever exist as a separate civilization

set apart and in opposition to other ancient civilizations?

Probably not.

On the other hand, does evidence exist that women once fought alongside men and even contributed to a wealth of "technology" such as wearing pants, being tattooed, and maybe even getting high once in a while instead of simply inventing agriculture, minding the home fires, and watching the kids?

Most definitely.

As is usually the case, interpreting history is never a simple task.

THE REPTILIAN HYPOTHESIS

> There are, of course, differences in the plausibility of any one conspiracy theory. In a 2013 poll, every second United States citizen questioned seemed convinced that there was some larger conspiracy at work in the assassination of the president John F. Kennedy in 1963, while "only" 4 per cent endorsed the notion that "reptilian people control our world … are gaining power." (Still a somewhat unnerving 12 million people.)
>
> —Roland Imhoff of the Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, Germany

I am not a lizard.

—Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook

Of all the topics we've covered so far in this book, the one before us now is probably going to be the most difficult to relate to and digest. It defies every one of our sensibilities and culturally induced ideas about history on Earth.

So far, we've explored stories about reptiles, serpents, snakes, and dragons. From Eden legends to Sumerian myths, from Canaanite religious beliefs to Native American oral histories, from the descending serpent motif at Mexico's Kukulkan pyramid to the Serpent Mound in Ohio, we have treated this material as allegory. We talked about what it might have meant to ancient people.

Now it's time to go a little further. The Reptilian Hypothesis (sometimes

called the Reptoid Hypothesis) suggests that we need to treat these stories as history rather than mythology. Any fair treatment of human history demands a look at all the evidence, not just the convenient evidence. It's going to be difficult for many of us, but surprisingly, it's a theory that combines a lot of facts, religious beliefs, and mythology from around the world, so keep an open mind and let the buyer beware.

Before we proceed, however, it might be best to keep a few facts in mind:

- Fact #1: The Mesozoic Era, the age when reptiles dominated Earth, lasted for about 252 million years.
- Fact #2: The Cenozoic Era, the age when mammals dominated Earth, has lasted for about sixty-five million years (so far).
- Fact #3: Subtracting Fact #2 from Fact #1 tells us that reptiles dominated Earth for about four times longer than mammals (so far).
- Fact #4: The earliest-known mammal was a shrewlike animal that fed on insects living on ferns that surrounded freshwater lakes about 160 million years ago. Every mammal alive today, from cats and rats and elephants to modern humans, evolved from this animal.
- Fact #5: The earliest evidence of modern humans is found in the Middle Paleolithic Era about two hundred thousand years ago. This date may soon be pushed back as far as three hundred thousand years.
- Fact #6: Subtracting Fact #5 from Fact #1 tells us that reptiles dominated Earth for 254,800,000 years longer than humans have (so far).
- Fact #7: In many ways, humans are biologically repurposed reptiles. In the womb, we feed off egg sacs, just like birds and reptiles. Egg sacs developed about three hundred million years ago. The three bones of our inner ears, our big brains, our teeth, and even our genes owe their genesis to our ancient reptile ancestors.

Now that we have those facts before us, here's the theory:

> The Reptilian Hypothesis states that Earth was once ruled by an intelligent reptilian civilization that either evolved here or originated elsewhere in the cosmos and traveled here. That civilization created the human race from existing animal species on Earth either through genetic manipulation or sexual intercourse. Their blood courses through our veins. They were the basis of the first gods worshipped by our ancestors, and that worship continues today through much of the religious mythology, icons, and images common to every world religion. As we shall see, their stories, barely disguised by modern religious practices, are familiar to everyone.

First, we have to clear up some terminology. The terms serpent, snake, reptile, and dragon are interchangeable, depending only on their cultural context. The serpent of Eden and the dragon of Arthurian lore represent the same entity. The snake of Mexican iconography is identical to the cobra of India.

Second, we're going to try to not differentiate between the two ideas about reptilian origin. The ancient alien folks are going to lean toward what amounts to an alien invasion. Others will defend the hypothesis that reptiles had plenty of time to evolve right here on Earth (see Fact #3 above). Wherever they came from and however it happened, the mythology dealing with serpents and humans puts them together "in the beginning."

With all that in mind, let's begin the story at the point when a reptilian civilization first encounters what will become the human race.

The Reptilian Hypothesis states that there was once a race of intelligent beings descended from dinosaurs that ruled Earth. They later bred with humanity's ancestors to create a race of giants.

In the familiar biblical story of Eden found in Genesis, the first man and first woman, Adam and Eve, lived innocently in the garden that was planet Earth. They ate the fruit nature provided and were in unity with each other, with nature, and with God, but they were capable of much more—and "much more" was what the serpent offered them.

Animals are not cognizant of right and wrong. Human pets develop an instinct for what is acceptable and not acceptable, but Fido doesn't refrain from jumping up on the furniture because he learns it is somehow unethical or immoral to do so. He just learns what behavior is tolerated and what is not.

In the same way, early humans had not yet developed a sense of duality, of right and wrong. That only happened when they "ate of the fruit of the tree of good and evil"—of right and wrong—the knowledge of duality.

The author of the Gospel of John doesn't try to hide anything. The serpent in the wilderness, placed on a pole to bring healing, is Christ on the cross.

How did that come about? The story goes that the "sons of God," the reptilian civilization, began to mate with "the daughters of men," the prehuman race. The result of that biological pairing produced a race of reptilian/human hybrids called Nephilim—half-breed giants.

Myths from all over describe the battles that ensued. In some of them, the gods send a catastrophic flood to destroy all life on Earth. In another, a human David slays a hybrid giant named Goliath, a son of the serpent elite, with a slingshot. The battle lines exist to this day. It seems that no matter where you go on Earth, you will find yourself on one side of the battle or the other. Some cultures hate and fear snakes. Others deify and worship them. Sometimes, our ancestors drew serpent images on the walls of caves. These were considered temples of worship. In the Middle East, the image of the swastika, four entwined snakes, was invented. It would later become an emblem of dominance and authority.

A strange, religious rite called circumcision was practiced by Semitic races. What does the manual removal of a male foreskin have to do with religion? Nothing—but the removal of the foreskin from what is sometimes euphemistically called a male "serpent" imitates the act of a snake shedding its skin. Every time a snake sheds its skin, it is "born again," so to speak. Thus, it is "saved" and achieves eternal life.

Some American Indians of the Southwest used to believe that if you killed a snake and hung it up in a tree for three days, you could bring life-giving rain to Earth. This mimics the basic tenet of the Christian religion. It's a curious story that is presented in a straightforward manner in the Bible. We studied this story in depth when we looked at the role of the serpent in the Eden stories. The author of the Gospel of John doesn't try to hide anything. The serpent in the wilderness, placed on a pole to bring healing, is Christ on the cross. No hidden meaning exists here. In John, chapter 3, he comes right out and says it. When Jesus was hung on the cross, just as all the old legends relate, he shed his human skin. Three days later, he rose from the dead as a

new person, surrounded by shining beings of light.

The reason this could all transpire in the way it did was because Jesus was of the bloodline of the serpent elite. That's why both Jewish and Christian scholars alike present the tedious genealogies of both the Old and New Testaments. They want to prove that Jesus was related to Adam and Eve, the first of the serpent hybrid line. He is even called "the Second Adam."

Consider, for example, the fourth verse of the well-known Christmas carol "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing":

Come, Desire of nations, come!

Fix in us Thy humble home:

Rise, the woman's conquering seed,

Bruise in us the serpent's head;

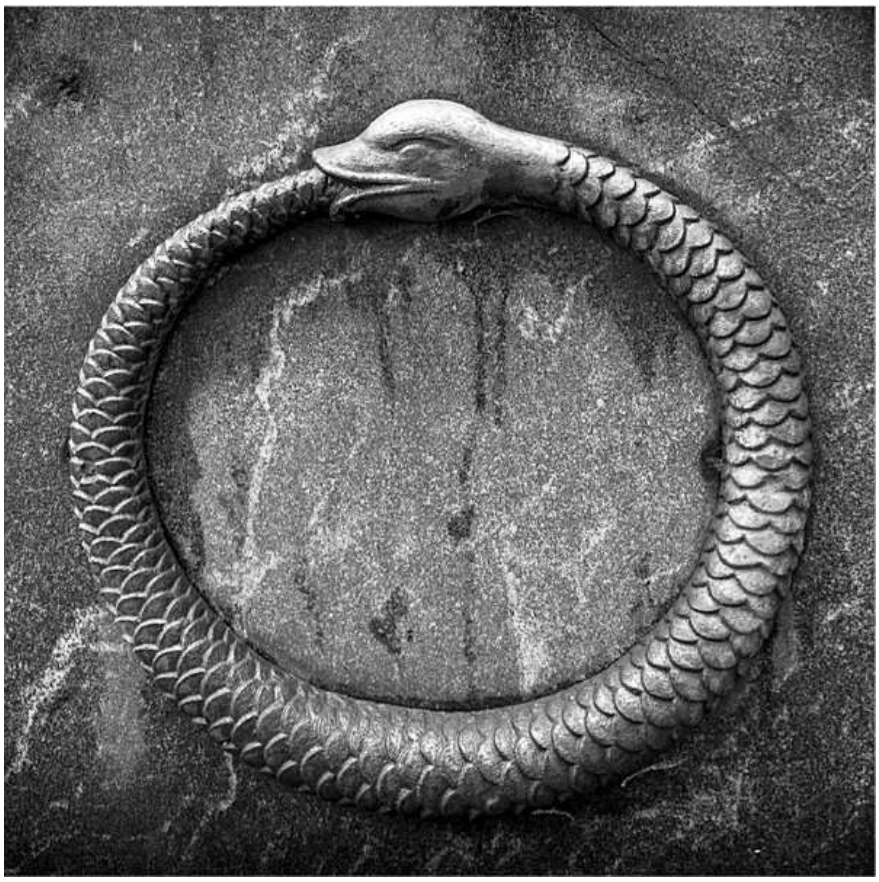
Adam's likeness now efface,

Stamp thine image in its place:

Second Adam from above,

Reinstate us in Thy love.

Anyone familiar with Dan Brown's best-seller *The Da Vinci Code* knows about the theory that the bloodline of Jesus is supposed to have been protected down through the years. Through his marriage to Mary Magdalene, his bloodline was carried to France after his crucifixion, where it became established in what became known as the Merovingian dynasty. According to those who believe the legend, that bloodline is still present in the secret elite who rule the world behind the scenes. They believe that the serpent is still present in our midst, and we commemorate it every time we go to church in order to eat its flesh and drink its blood.



The Ouroborus symbol of a snake eating its own tail represents the circle of time, a concept reminiscent of Jesus' own words: "I am the beginning and the end."

Consider the well-known image of a snake swallowing its own tail (the Ouroborus). By doing so, it is usually pictured as saying, "My end is my beginning"— the circle of time. This is eerily similar to the words of Jesus in Revelation 22:13 when he said, "I am the beginning and the end." Thus, he offers both eternal life, as a snake sheds its skin, and healing, as pictured in the caduceus on the certificate of your family doctor. It shows a pair of serpents entwined around a staff. It is a symbol of medicine—of healing.

Pictured on the Mexican flag is an eagle and a serpent. This refers back to an Aztec legend that the first people who traveled down to Mexico from the north were told by the god Huitzilopochtli to proceed until they came to an eagle perched on a cactus, devouring a snake. They eventually found exactly this battle transpiring. The place where they settled is now known as Mexico City.

Sometimes, the serpent is pictured as evil. Everyone who is familiar with the *Harry Potter* books knows about the evil wizard Salazar Slytherin

and his ability to speak to snakes, a talent that he passed down to his followers.

The serpent has its followers as well. The dragon (often called “Serpent” in the West) is a universal metaphor for Earth energy. “Dragon Lines” and the “Paths of the Serpent” were once well known. Their routes, vortexes, and convergence spots were often marked by standing stones, stone circles, and monuments. Stonehenge is probably the best-known example, situated as it is just south of the Michael and Mary “Serpent Lines,” probably the most well-documented energy leys in all of England. Their course is marked by many famous standing stones and holy places, including Glastonbury and Avebury.

The Age of Enlightenment and the rise of Western science cast much of this old religion into the dustbin of mythology and superstition, but the underlying Earth energies continued to manifest their existence to a few who followed the old ways.

Australian Aborigine elders still claim to see a landscape seamed with energy lines.

Modern contractors in Hawaii, even in this day and age, make it a practice to consult with respected experts called Kahunas before orienting new buildings.

New York businesses sometimes call upon a Chinese tradition by hiring feng shui masters to design office spaces.

In short, the phenomenon of Earth energy—dragon energy—has not gone away. Indeed, published results in disparate fields, from modern theoretical physics to DNA research in migrating butterflies, seem to describe a mathematical, observable, and repeatable quantum reality that our ancestors would readily recognize as central to their core experience.

The dragon, once familiar and active, may have gone to sleep for a few centuries, but thanks to the microscopes, telescopes, and computer-driven mathematics of a new breed of scientific pioneers, it is awakening. Humankind might as well be entering a new phase of understanding and practice of what was once called “Earth magic.”

Was this the religion of the ancient reptilian civilization that some believe once ruled Earth? Did they attempt to pass on to our ancestors the secrets that enabled them to dominate for so many millions of years? Are some of those secrets still lurking in the shadows of modern religions that

have forgotten what their original meaning was?

The myths tell us that if we take these stories seriously—history disguised as mythology—we will discover that, like all civilizations, some of the serpent survivors were friendly, and some were not. Some sought to pass on their wisdom. They were as “wise as serpents.” Others attempted to defeat and conquer.

However, if the myths are true and the ancient alien folks are right, we may yet have to deal with them because just as the myths speak of reptilian ancestors descending from the skies, they always leave a message: “We’ll be back!”

All religions have a similar continuing theme. The Founders will return someday.

Keep your eyes on the skies!

PART IV: COULD WE BE NEXT?

It's tough to make predictions, especially about the future.

—Yogi Berra

The Big Picture

It's time to draw some conclusions—to step back and look at the big picture. A study of where our civilization has been and how we've arrived at our present point in history inevitably points in the direction of the future. It indicates where we are headed. That's where we now need to go.

To be perfectly honest, although the picture may be murky, unless we change our ways as a so-called civilized people, the future doesn't look very good.

Our long-term existence as a recognizable species is, of course, doomed. We know that someday, the sun will expand into a red giant, burning everything we know to a crisp before becoming a white dwarf star. The specific fate of the whole universe, however, is less certain, but whether it collapses into itself in a big crunch or simply is lost in the vastness of eternity, it, too, will cease to exist. Those things are beyond our control.

Our quest, then, is for short-term indications within the life span of foreseeable future generations.

"Civilization" is now a global term. For better or for worse, we are one species, inhabiting one planet, and connected to each other in bonds that are too universal to dissolve. It is true that, politically, we still act as though we live in tribal cultures. Our self-image has not yet caught up with our reality, but if you can talk to Facebook friends around the world and buy a McDonald's hamburger in Cairo, Moscow, and Shanghai as well as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, you're kidding yourself if you think you're not connected to everyone else.

Alas, the short-term fate of our civilization, which has been linked to growth, expansion, and progress, doesn't look very good right now. Does a limit to growth exist? The studies all indicate that the answer is yes, and we are quickly approaching it.

The Greeks gave us the legend of Sisyphus. Because of his hubris, his belief in his own cleverness, and his desire to think of himself as a god in control of his own destiny, Zeus sentenced him to push a great boulder up a hill. Then, when he was almost at the top, it would roll down, and he was forced to start all over again each day.

We might ask if our civilization, indeed, of each and every civilization that ever existed, is Sisyphus. Does a limit exist to the complexity humans can handle? Do we reach a certain point only to see it all come crashing down again and again? Is that the real story of human civilization?

Does the possibility exist of a more hopeful story? Instead of civilizations replacing one another in a seemingly endless stream, doomed to start over from scratch again and again, is it possible that they build on one another? Without realizing it, do we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before and are thus able to reach further toward the heavens? Is an overarching story at work? Are we part of something so big that we cannot see it during the span of one human lifetime or even the course of one civilization's experience on Earth? Is evolution doing its work, building ever so slowly a fully evolved species called, in the words of Yuval Noah Harari, "Homo-Deus," the god-man? Are we a part of what might even be called a divine project, however we choose to define the word "divine"? Is purpose coursing through our civilized veins?

These are big questions—hard questions. We're now going to take them on, beginning with civilization itself. Then, we're going to move on to human purpose in history. Finally, we're going to lift our eyes to the cosmos, the universe, and even the multiverse, which gave birth to all we know.

It's a big undertaking—it may even prove to be beyond our capabilities—but if the past can inform the future, we've already laid the groundwork. We've looked at evidence in stone. We've listened to evidence in story. Now it's time to see where that evidence points.

WERE WE THE FIRST ON PLANET EARTH?

Adam Frank is an astrophysicist whose work at the University of Rochester leads the field when it comes to determining how stars form and die. He calls himself an "evangelist for science." Therefore, in an article written for *The Atlantic* on April 13, 2018, it comes as a bit of a shock when he reveals an unexpected turn in his conversation with Gavin Schmidt, the director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies. These are two worldclass scientists, yet they found themselves speculating about a subject that is often relegated to the misty hallways of "fringe" history.

Frank asked Schmidt whether or not industrial civilizations that arise on

planet Earth “will, through their own activity, trigger their own version of a climate shift.”

He was obviously thinking about the future.

Schmidt’s reply, therefore, caught him by surprise.

“Wait a second,” Schmidt said. “How do you know we’re the only time there’s been a civilization on our own planet?”

Frank confessed that “it took me a few seconds to pick my jaw off the floor.”

What Schmidt, a respected space scientist from NASA, was suggesting was that we can’t rule out the possibility that civilizations have come and gone on Earth over a period of millions, not thousands, of years.

The resulting conversation eventually became an article that was published in the *International Journal of Astrobiology*. In Frank’s words, “Gavin’s penetrating question opened a window not just onto Earth’s past, but also onto our own future.”

When it comes to geology, an event horizon is in our past that is very difficult to penetrate. In other words, we can’t see very well past 2.6 million years ago, a time called the Quaternary Period. The oldest ancient surface of Earth is about 1.8 million years old. It forms a section of the Negev Desert. Anything older than that requires the type of cross-section study found in cliff faces or rock cuts such as those of the Grand Canyon.

Our species is only, at the very most, some three hundred thousand years old, so if a species inhabited our planet before the geological event horizon, any sign of their existence would by now be pulverized and recycled into the proverbial “dust of the Earth.” That leaves the door wide open for some of the so-called mythological species we’ve been studying that are either nonhuman or human hybrids of some sort, remembered in tales of the “gods” coming to Earth and mating with “the daughters of men.”

Suppose such an advanced mammalian, or, for that matter, reptilian civilization actually lived and died on Earth some one hundred million years ago? Suppose it lasted for one hundred thousand years, which is more than three times longer than we’ve been around and far more than five hundred times longer than our industrial civilization has survived so far? Would any evidence of it exist in the geological record?

A few fossils might exist, but those would be few and far between, easily missed or misinterpreted. If our hypothetical civilization had discovered fastfood wrappers, evidence of plastic would probably be left behind. If they used fertilizers like we do, the atmosphere itself might show indications of it. Even our use of synthetic steroids in food production will probably be detectable in ten million years, assuming future scientists think to look for it.

However, the biggest indicator we are now leaving behind for future scientists to measure is also a significant clue that might have existed in past ancient civilizations. It used to be called global warming. Now it's called climate change, and it occurs when we burn fossil fuels at the accelerated rate we're doing today.

The fossil fuels we are burning are causing climate change, but they are also creating an unusual record that we were here by causing measurable isotope shifts. Someday, thousands or millions of years from now, a scientist might find this clue.

When we burn such fuels, we release carbon back into Earth's atmosphere. Any future scientist will be able to measure the isotope shifts we are producing today. It's called the Suess Effect, and we see evidence of such shifts in ice samples extracted from glacial core samples and various rock formations. If we can measure these things today, and future scientists will be

able to use such information to study our planetary impact, can we find such evidence from the distant past?

The answer is yes, we can, and yes, we have.

Fifty-six million years ago, our planet entered into a time period called the Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum (PETM). Average temperatures were almost 15 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than today. A typical summer day at the North Pole might have reached 70 degrees Fahrenheit (21 degrees Celsius).

Here's the problem. This warming mimics almost exactly the rate and speed at which Earth is heating up today as a result of our burning fossil fuels in the industrialized world—and this isn't the only time it's happened. An event called the Eocene Layers of Mysterious Origin occurred 53.7 million years ago, and during the Cretaceous period, a seventy-nine-million-year time period during the reign of the dinosaurs, an extinction event occurred that left the ocean virtually without oxygen for thousands of years.

No one knows why these events happened. Many scientists offer speculations, but the trigger for global warming before our industrial civilization started kicking off a climate change event during the present day is unknown.

Here's what we're left with. We don't know what caused global warming in the past. We do know what triggered it in the present, which is continuing into the foreseeable future. This raises an inconvenient fact. If industrialization can set off an extinction-level catastrophe, as it seems to be doing right now, could civilized industrialization have been the trigger for global warming extinction events in the past?

We just don't know. Such events happened. We know that to be true. We can measure them, but they happened on the other side of the geological event horizon of about 2.6 million years. If civilizations existed, and ended, that long ago, any artifacts or evidence would be long since gone except for the PETM signature.

However, the PETM signature is there. We see it and can measure it, so we are forced to say that, as fantastic as it sounds, we have to consider that the evidence points to the fact that ancient, industrialized civilizations existed on Earth in the distant past and that they brought about their own demise by following precisely the same path we are following today. Since the rates at

which we are dumping carbon into the atmosphere are occurring faster than seems to be the case in the past, we are forced to ask if we are doing it even more rapidly than they did. Is our civilization becoming worse than previous ones? Are we “them” on steroids?

If a previous ancient civilization was able to foresee the problem just like we do but was able to steer clear before the end came, as we so far don’t seem to be able to do, their industrial phase might have been short enough that we can’t detect it, but one way or another, it’s an intriguing, if frightening, theory.

Scientists exhibit a knee-jerk reaction against any theory that includes prehuman civilizations. Even Adam Frank sounds a bit sheepish in his *Atlantic* magazine article:

If a previous ancient civilization was able to foresee the problem just like we do but was able to steer clear before the end came … their industrial phase might have been short enough that we can’t detect it.…

> It’s not often that you write a paper proposing a hypothesis that you don’t support. Gavin and I don’t believe the Earth once hosted a 50-million-year-old Paleocene civilization. But by asking if we could “see” truly ancient industrial civilizations, we were forced to ask about the generic kinds of impacts any civilization might have on a planet. That’s exactly what the astrobiological perspective on climate change is all about. Civilization building means harvesting energy from the planet to do work (i.e., the work of civilization building). Once the civilization reaches truly planetary scales, there has to be some feedback on the coupled planetary systems that gave it birth (air, water, rock). This will be particularly true for young civilizations like ours still climbing up the ladder of technological capacity. There is, in other words, no free lunch. While some energy sources will have lower impact—say solar vs. fossil fuels—you can’t power a global civilization without some degree of impact on the planet.

Earlier, we asked if it might be possible for civilizations to build on one another. In this regard, Frank might be able to offer a little hope, even though he doesn't seem to believe in the implications of his theory:

> In addition, our work also opened up the speculative possibility that some planets might have fossil-fuel-driven cycles of civilization building and collapse. If a civilization uses fossil fuels, the climate change they trigger can lead to a large decrease in ocean oxygen levels. These low oxygen levels (called ocean anoxia) help trigger the conditions needed for making fossil fuels like oil and coal in the first place. In this way, a civilization and its demise might sow the seed for new civilizations in the future.

Even if all this is true, however, and civilizations have come and gone in the past without leaving much evidence for us to be able to dig up and discover, we need to ask about our immediate future. What might happen in our lifetime or even the lifetime of our grandchildren? In other words, by considering our own circumstances, we might be able to better understand whether or not our situation is unique.

There, too, the answer seems pretty bleak. Let's consider a few scenarios:

Climate Change

We have converted the biosphere into a machine, run by us, that could crash. Fossil fuels are not the ultimate answer for our survival, but we seem unalterably wedded to them. Just to think about the problem, so far out of the reach of any of us to correct, despite our feeble efforts to recycle and reduce our carbon footprint, leads to despair.

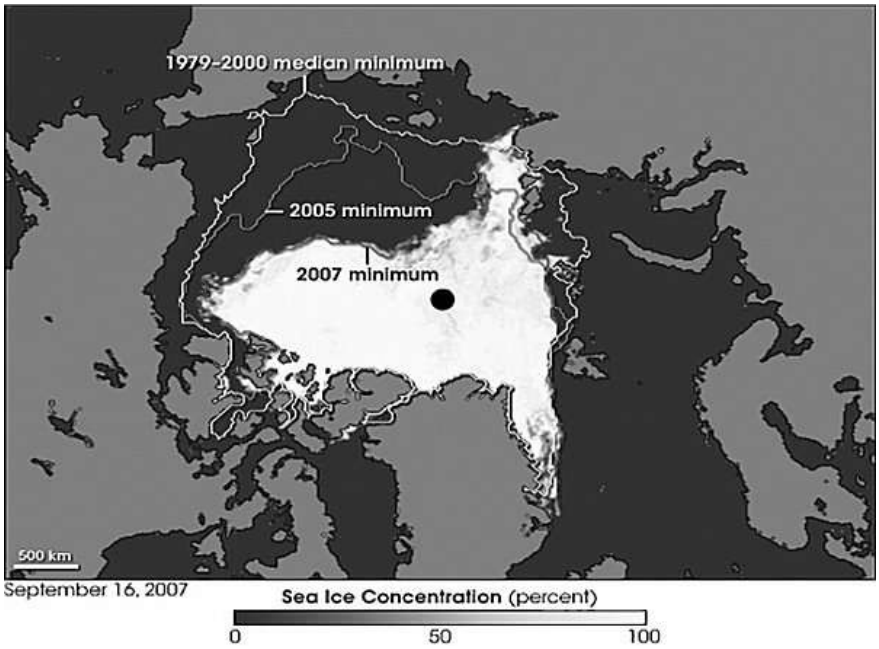
Peter Kalmus, in an article written for the *New York Times* on August 9, 2018, put it succinctly:

> To think daily about climate change and any of its dire implications can be a crushing psychological burden. Each of us is just one mammal, with all our mammalian limitations—we get tired, sad, irritated, sick, overwhelmed—and the climate crisis wields the force of 8 billion humans with infrastructure, corporations, capital, politics, and imaginations heavily invested in burning fossil fuel.

He went on to quote Renee Lertzman, author of *Environmental Melancholia:*

Psychoanalytic Dimensions of Engagement:

> It's important to remember that inaction is rarely about a lack of concern or care, but is so much more complex. Namely, that we westerners are living in a society that is still deeply entrenched in the very practices we now know are damaging and destructive. This creates a very specific kind of situation—what psychologists call cognitive dissonance. Unless we know how to work with this dissonance, we will continue to come up against resistance, inaction, and reactivity.



The impact of climate change is real and measurable, as can be seen in this comparison over the years of ice levels in the Arctic.

It's not a pretty picture, is it? It makes it seem as though ten thousand years from now, survivors of what by then will be called our mythical, lost civilization will tell archaeologists that a great civilization of gods once lived. They could fly to the Moon. They had magical devices with which they could see each other and talk to one another, even if they were on the opposite sides of Earth. They had great wisdom, but they grew arrogant and tried to dominate other people. The cosmos struck them down, and they disappeared, except for the artifacts, which sometimes show up buried deep in the ground.

Astronomical Calamities

Earth has been bombarded by extraterrestrial comets and asteroids before. It will certainly happen again. Over the course of previous chapters, we've already mentioned the asteroid that wiped out the dinosaurs sixty-five million years ago. We've even seen that 12,800 years ago, and perhaps again 11,600 years ago, we had a major extinction called the Younger Dryas comet event, when a segmented comet exploded in the skies over North America and brought major civilizations around the world to a close.

Now consider the close calls we've had recently:

- 2013—The Chelyabinsk meteor explosion
- 2014—The NASA alert that a meteor skimmed past Earth at 23,000 miles per hour
- 2015—NASA announced that an unexpected and uncharted asteroid passed close to Earth
- 2016—A huge comet whizzed past Earth and was followed by two more in the next few days
- 2017—An asteroid gave Earth a close shave
- 2017—The St. Patrick's Day meteor was viewed by hundreds of people

In 2013 a large meteor exploded over Chelyabinsk, Russia, that was seen by hundreds of people. It was a reminder that we are not safe from a meteor impact just because this particular one was a little too small to be catastrophic.

- 2017—NASA announced that a Gibraltar-sized rock passed close to Earth

In short, only a cockeyed optimist would assume that since we've had so many recent close calls, our record will continue unblemished into the immediate future. Outer space is an immense shooting gallery, but someday, sooner or later, our number will be called.

Economics and Internal Strife

Although politicians don't find it convenient to admit it, given the tribal mindset of modern countries, we live in a global economy run by big corporations. Your American car contains parts built in Europe, Japan, China, and Mexico. Local economies still exist, but they are minor in comparison. More and more companies are finding it cheaper to relocate overseas, where they can take advantage of cheap labor and tax structures.

On average, our grocery stores contain a three-day supply of food. Once that is gone, if the trucks can't get through or the power remains off, people will begin to starve.

A global economy means that the forces inherent in economic policies are too cumbersome to respond quickly to either emergencies or the checks and balances of any one country. "Too big to fail" is now an axiom. No one person or government is really in charge anymore.

Speaking of emergencies, self-sufficiency is an outdated concept. As individuals, we have lost the ability to really provide for ourselves if the lights go out. Gone are the days when a pioneer family could go off into the wilderness and live comfortably based on their own skill set. As we have recently witnessed way too often, in the event of a major disruption of our power grid, or even a major political event such as an assassination or civil disturbance, looting and rioting become major issues. Police and armed guards have to protect areas of discontent from citizens, not invaders.

On average, our grocery stores contain a three-day supply of food. Once that is gone, if the trucks can't get through or the power remains off, people

will begin to starve. At that point, it's too late to plant a garden, assuming you have both the space and the skills. Even if you do, you can't protect yourself. A thief with a bigger gun who is just as hungry as you are but with fewer scruples is always waiting around the corner.

If defending our home, family, and food supply becomes an issue, as many survivalists seem to think it is, we will quickly be in serious trouble. Any future that becomes a simple struggle to get by is not a hopeful future at all. Politicians can only set goals that last the length of their term of office, no more than ten or twenty years at the most. One administration can easily overthrow the work of its predecessor.

War

A rapidly changing world is evolving beyond our ability to cope. Weapons of mass destruction now include Internet viruses that attack infrastructure, fake news released to a confused and untrusting public on social media, digital election tampering, global epidemics, and more traditional bombs and delivery systems that are just plain impossible to defend against. It's no longer a matter of *if* an irresponsible terrorist who doesn't care whether he lives or dies attacks a target of thousands of people. We've seen it happen over and over in the last decade alone. It's just a matter of *when* it will happen again.

Religion

One connecting, global religion does not exist. In our day, religion divides more than it unites. Morality is often turned on its head. To listen to some adherents, God is calling for the death and destruction of whole populations.

Might it be possible, though, that somehow, beyond our human corruption and deceit, we are, indeed, in the hands of a greater reality? We can only hope because in the end, any solution to the problems we face in the world today will have to come from a spiritual change in the human heart. We can't legislate morality and ethics. The change has to come from within. If we are going to do whatever the right thing is, we'll have to decide to do it on our own and on a global stage. Right now, barring a miracle, that seems like a pretty hopeless idea.

Assimilation

On one level, the assimilation of races is viewed by many to be a sign of the end. Seemingly, humans need for “us” to be against “them.”

However, the process of becoming one in culture, if not in race, might offer some hope in a hopeless world if we dare consider it. A universal culture might make for less racial tension.

On the other hand, would we simply invent something else to take its place?

THOUGHTS OF THE PAST

Sometimes, here in my self-imposed sanctuary in the woods of South Carolina, I wonder about the people who, not long ago, lived right here on this spot of ground. They didn’t know anything about electric lights and computers. They didn’t check their e-mails a dozen times a day. They didn’t worry about life insurance and car payments.

Oh, they had other worries, I’m sure. For one thing, they were probably concerned about where their next meal was coming from. I usually don’t think about stuff like that. Not unless the power goes out for more than a few hours. Then I get a bit antsy.

They probably didn’t spend much time wondering whether or not they were the first people to live on this planet. They didn’t have much of a conception about what the word “progress” means. They didn’t think in terms of inhabiting a global village or the state of the world’s economy. Electricity would have struck them as being the epitome of magic.

Nevertheless, they were very intelligent, and if they observed me trying to survive in their world, they would have considered me pretty hopeless. If I was going to survive, they would have to take care of me and teach me the ropes until I learned their methods of survival. I like to think they would have been patient with such a completely helpless person.

Sometimes, I wonder if their life was better than mine. They could keep things in perspective. They weren’t constantly confronted with new ideas and technologies that left them frustrated. They probably spent a lot more time sitting around a fire and talking than I do. Their relationships were probably a lot more stable. They didn’t worry about what would happen to them when

they got old. That's what families were for. They didn't fret about outliving their bank accounts.

I'll be the first to admit that their way of life is attractive at times, but then, when I finish daydreaming, I go back inside away from the bugs, turn up the central air conditioning, and flip on the TV. That usually brings me back to the present—or, if nostalgic and romantic ideas are still rattling around in my brain, the comfortable flush toilet restores my sense of balance.

The truth is that in some ways, we are very different from past civilizations. In other ways, we are not. We are still flesh-and-blood people who think and feel, and Earth will continue to change and evolve. The continents will drift, forming new shapes and sizes. The sea levels will rise and fall. Landmasses will evolve. Earth will continue on with or without us.

Maybe, however, ancient civilizations were not like us. They might have evolved from a completely different species, lived their time in the sun, figuring they would last forever, and then gone the way of all flesh. Maybe they would seem extremely alien to us. Maybe they even were aliens, arriving here from distant shores far removed from our planet. In other words, can one civilization, either homegrown terrestrial or alien, actually help form and shape another?

That brings us another step closer in our search for the big picture. Now we're talking about the evolution of life itself. Did we evolve here? Do civilizations come and go independent of observations from other worlds? Are we residents of an island floating in the vast reaches of space? Are we, as many of the ancient myths claim, the product of genetic, or even physical, tampering from entities of other worlds? Have we been visited in the past? Are we part of a grand, cosmic experiment that tinkers with life in the cosmos from time to time?

Did Our Civilization on Earth Come from the Heavens?

On March 25, 1925, Tennessee state representative John Butler lobbied his state legislature to pass a law banning the teaching of evolution in public schools. Although he knew very little about science and nothing about what was then called Darwin's theory of evolution, he was worried, he said, because he had "read in the paper that boys and girls were coming home from

school and telling their fathers and mothers that the Bible was all nonsense." Austin Peay, the governor of Tennessee, signed the bill to appease rural legislators, but he later confessed that he never thought it would be enforced and thus interfere with education in any way. Attorney William Jennings Bryan was enthusiastic in his thanks to Governor Peay, saying, "The Christian parents of the state owe you a debt of gratitude for saving their children from the poisonous influence of an unproven hypothesis."

The American Civil Liberties Union, however, was less than enthusiastic. It decided to put its financial support behind a test case.

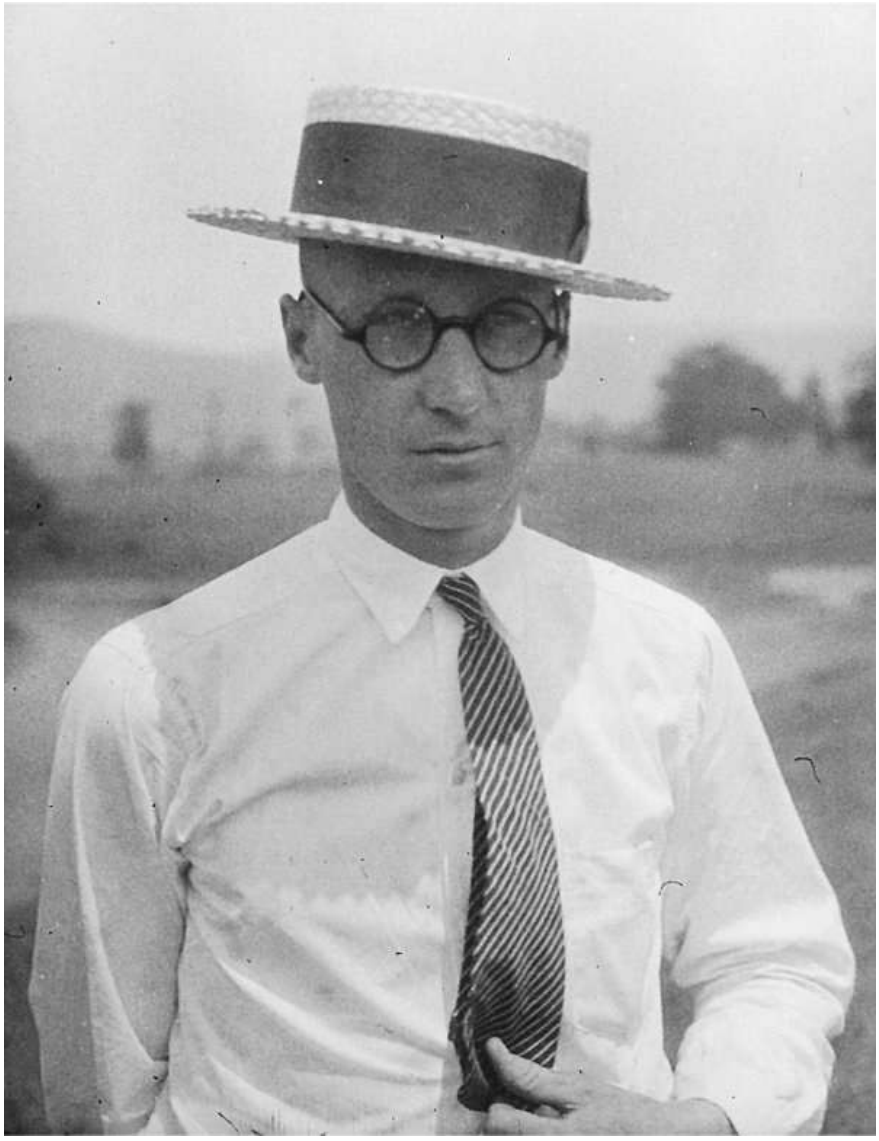
John Scopes, an educator who had served as a substitute biology teacher, agreed to be tried for violating the new law. In the classroom, he had used one chapter from a 1914 textbook written by George William Hunter called *Civic Biology: Presented in Problems*. It explained the theory of evolution and the origin of race. Little did he, or anyone else, know what was about to happen. Clarence Darrow was appointed defense attorney, and William Jennings Bryan was eventually brought in to prosecute.

The trial, in today's terms, went viral. Dubbed "the Scopes Monkey Trial," it was broadcast on the radio throughout the United States and covered by reporters from every major newspaper in the country.

None of the people involved were acting on the basis of moral or ethical principles. The trial was political from the start. George Rappleyea, the manager for the Cumberland Coal and Iron Company, lobbied the county superintendent to hold the trial because he thought it would bring publicity to Dayton and boost the local economy. His argument was simple. "As it is, the law is not enforced. If you win, it will be enforced. If I win, the law will be repealed. We're game, aren't we?"

At issue was a loophole in the Butler law. It prohibited the teaching of the theory of evolution but required teachers to use a textbook that explicitly described and endorsed it. The teachers found themselves in a lose/lose situation. By using the required textbook, they were forced to break the law.

Scopes couldn't even remember whether or not he had actually taught evolution in class. All he had done was show students the chart in the textbook. He was so anxious to proceed, however, that he encouraged some of his students to testify against him and coached them in their responses.



Teacher John Scopes was a willing defendant in the fight to defend science from religious doctrine. Evolution versus creationism is a step in the right direction. Today, scientists are debating whether consciousness might create reality rather than the other way around.

One student later told reporters, “I believe in part of evolution, but I don’t believe in the monkey business.” He never knew that he had coined a new phrase.

Presiding Judge John T. Raulston convened the jury and, in newspaper accounts of the trial, “all but instructed the grand jury to indict Scopes, despite the meager evidence against him and the widely reported stories questioning whether the willing defendant had ever taught evolution in the classroom.”

Scopes was arrested, charged, and found guilty. He never spent any time

in jail because his bail, set at $500, was immediately paid by Paul Patterson, who owned the *Baltimore Sun* newspaper.

The theory of evolution lost the battle of Dayton, but eventually won the war. It is now accepted and taught throughout the United States, but the issue is far from over. The difference is that now, the argument on both sides has become much more sophisticated.

"Creationism" became "intelligent design." That allowed religious folks to open the umbrella a little and bring under their cover those who believed in God but didn't prescribe to the rest of the fundamentalist/evangelical agenda. Jews, Muslims, and Catholics could now feel comfortable under the same tent, at least as far as the origin of life was concerned.

Lately, however, the battleground has undergone a dynamic shift. Non-religious scientists engaged in the study of the mind/brain controversy have entered the picture.

I wrote about this extensively in my book *Supernatural Gods* (Visible Ink Press, 2017), so let's just offer a quick summary here. This gets complicated, so stick with me for a minute for what will at first feel like a detour.

Those who study the human brain have begun to suspect that mind and brain might be separate things. "Mind" consists of thoughts, emotions, memories, feelings, and intuitions. You can't put those under a microscope. "Brain" means neurons, protoplasm, and cells. Those you can study.

For a while, "mind equals brain" was the accepted gospel. "Mind things" were simply a product of neurons firing away with electromagnetic energy. This can be measured and quantified, so "mind" was kept within the confines of measurable brain research. In most universities, this system still prevails.

However, things have now changed, again partly due to a court case. Some scientists are beginning to wonder if "mind" might be a receptor for what can best be called a universal consciousness. In other words, the brain might be a receptor of "mind."

A television receives electrical signals and converts them into digitally induced light pixels on a screen. You can take a television apart and study it, but you can't say that the picture and sound of your favorite show comes from within your TV or even from within your house. They appear to, but

that appearance is an illusion. They are actually generated from outside. Actual events and real actors are filmed somewhere else, converted into electrical, digital signals, bounced up into space and around the world, caught by a tower somewhere, and relayed into your home, where your TV receives the signals and converts them into electronic bits of energy and vibration, which are picked up by your eyes and ears. You can view the results of this technological magic, but you can't say it originates in your TV, no matter how many little red lights flash on and off.

Can we really understand the brain without at least considering the source of consciousness and mind? Can we arrive at a complete understanding of one without considering its connection to the others?

As soon as this metaphor was taken seriously, philosophy, religion, metaphysics, and technology started to overlap. Representatives of all the various fields of study were forced to ask serious questions. They began to ask whether the study of the brain needed to move out and away from only biology. Can we really understand the brain without at least considering the source of consciousness and mind? Can we arrive at a complete understanding of one without considering its connection to the others?

As long as traditional scientists held the field, the verdict was clear. Mind equals brain! Therefore, when you are brain dead, you cease to exist.

However, when the issue went to court, just as in the Scopes Trial, this verdict became much more complicated.

In February 1990, a young woman named Terri Schiavo suffered brain damage. Just like the 1925 court case in Dayton, Ohio, politics, sparked by religious convictions and a desire for popular support, soon entered the picture.

The legislative, executive, and judicial branches of both the State of Florida and the U.S. federal government became involved in November 1998, when Michael Schiavo, Terri's husband, thought her body had gone through enough. He sought permission to remove his wife's feeding tube in order to

end what is often called a “vegetative” or “brain-dead” state. In effect, he said, “Her brain has died. She is gone. Let her body catch up.”

Two days later, Terri’s parents entered the picture. They demanded that the feeding tube be reinserted. That simple act sparked a national debate that grew to involve governors, churches, doctors, lawyers, religious leaders, and scientists.

The news programs featured experts from all sides of the issue. The national debate grew. The issue was penetrating and involved core issues of life after death. If we die when our brain ceases to function, do we live on after the body stops breathing? What, after all, is death? Does a universal God, a universal Mind, or a universal Consciousness exist from which we arise and to which we return at physical death? It was, and remains, an important debate.

Also at stake is the whole issue of origins. How can we possibly know who we are if we don’t know where we come from and where we’re going? Could it be possible that we are here by some kind of design, be it a god, an impersonal force, a universal consciousness, or something else totally beyond our comprehension?

Scientists who began to take seriously the whole idea of a great Purpose behind the coming and going of individuals, civilizations, and even whole universes couldn’t use the phrase “intelligent design.” That had been coined and commandeered by the religious right, so they started to talk instead about “design.”

The debate then became “design” versus “evolution,” but now, the argument had shifted away from “God versus no God” to “informed universe versus blind chance.”

How does this play out in terms of human origins? How do we each consider evidence from many sources when we begin to argue about how life originated on our planet?

In today’s materialistic, technologically based, left-brained, scientific-method culture, the world still abounds in mystery. The planet is full of ancient evidence in stone, from Stonehenge to Machu Picchu, that advanced civilizations came before us. They devoted a great deal of time and energy to constructing mysterious monuments that we simply do not understand. We can no longer turn a blind eye and think that we were the first sophisticated

civilization to come down the pike.

Where did the ancients come from? How did intelligent life begin on this planet? Is it a matter of blind chance, or are we witnessing some kind of purpose at work? Are our minds connected to a higher Consciousness? If so, how and when did we become aware of it? What is the origin of life itself?

Let's begin with life on the planet and move out from there.

Origins of Life on the Planet

Only two ways are possible that life could have begun on Earth: either it originated here, or it was brought here.

Most scientists who study such things operate on the assumption that somehow, some way, something happened right here on Earth that managed to work the magic. They are almost compelled to reject the belief that living species are the way they are because they were designed to be that way. Life must have been part of a universal process. Eventually, science will learn to understand it. It is built into the very fabric of the cosmos; thus, it is capable of repeating itself on planet after planet throughout the universe.

Current theories, of course, attempt to explain it. For quite a while, Richard Dawkins was the leading evangelist for this view. His best-selling book *The God Delusion* was only one of many making the case that any belief in God is not just wrong, it is potentially deadly. When he considered the atrocities done in this world in the name of God, he made a compelling case.

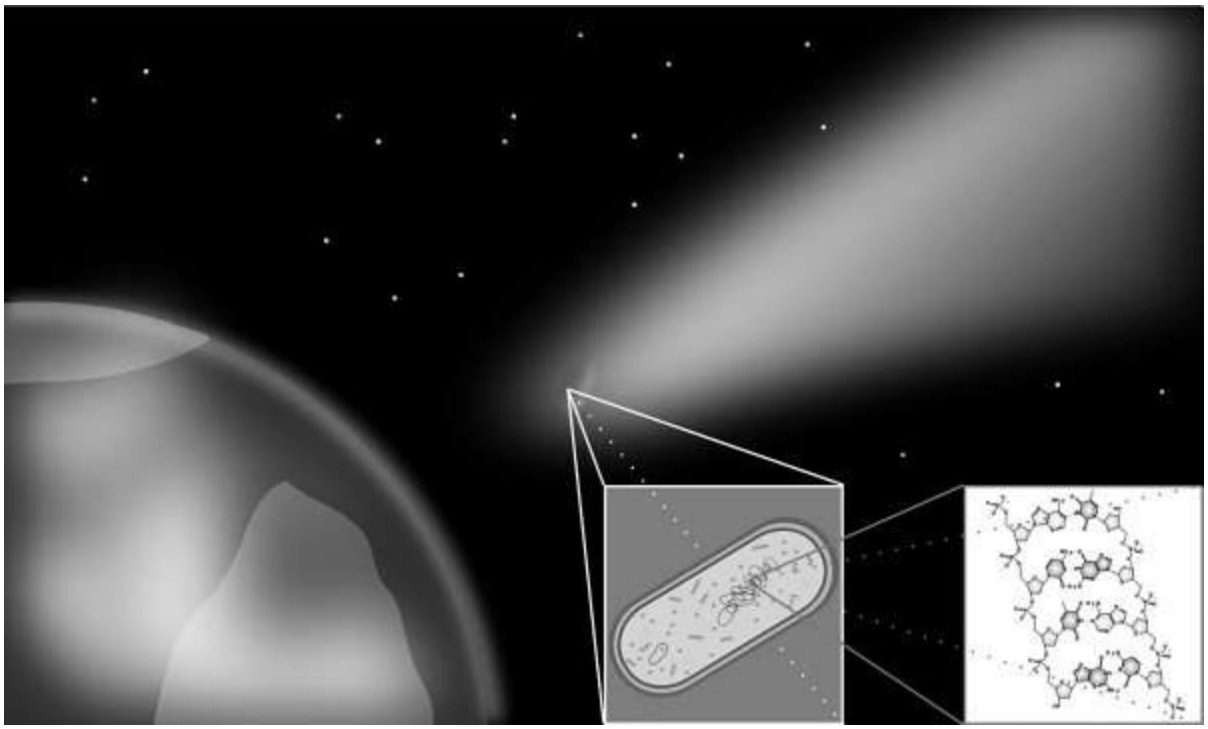
However, just because traditional definitions of the word "God" have led to terrible consequences so often, does that mean that no greater Purpose or Consciousness exists that is way, way above our ability to grasp?

One of the questions raised in this debate involves the origin of life on our planet. The truth is that no one really knows how it came to pass that one day inorganic material suddenly developed the capacity to manufacture reproducing cells complete with DNA that could guide the course of evolution and eventually produce civilizations. Although many experiments have tried to unlock the mystery of life, we just don't have any clear, definitive explanation yet, so let's postulate a few explanations and see how far we get.

Panspermia

The most comfortable way to explain the origin of life on Earth is to theorize that life here was seeded from life out in the cosmos somewhere. That is to say, biological life developed somewhere else in the universe and was then brought here by interplanetary transport, be it comet, asteroid, space dust, or flying saucer. Once it arrived on our planet, which was full of all the right building blocks that could nurture and sustain its existence, it began to flourish, evolving from single cells to what we see all around us today.

This theory is called panspermia, meaning "seeds everywhere." Anaxagoras, a Greek contemporary of Socrates, was the first to think along these lines and record his thoughts. At the time, Aristotle, one of his contemporaries, disagreed. He thought life came about by a process he called "spontaneous generation."



Panspermia is the theory that life on Earth arrived via microorganisms hitchhiking on dust and debris from other planets. This concept, however, does not address *how* life began on those other worlds in the first place.

Science landed on the side of Aristotle and stayed there for more than two thousand years. Then, Louis Pasteur performed an experiment in 1864 that proved that Aristotle, and everyone else, had been wrong for all this time. Although a few diehards tried to hold on by saying that life had begun

on Earth spontaneously one time by accident before settling down into an observable process, they couldn't save the theory. It died a quick death, even though no other ideas were around that could better explain the problem.

Where and how had life come from nonlife?

The religious hypothesis declared that God had brought it about, but science was understandably reluctant to go along.

The path of least resistance was to kick the proverbial can down the road, or at least off the planet. In other words, we may not know how life developed out in the cosmos, but we can guess how it came to be here on planet Earth. Life arrived on an interplanetary transport that made contact either through an accidental collision or a deliberate act. It happened sometime in the distant past; thus, the evidence of that first contact is long gone.

This is a good, safe theory that lets present-day biologists off the hook. It offers a safe, logical way to explain things. No one was around billions of years ago to watch it happen, so why not?

That's a good, middle-of-the-road theory halfway between "God did it" and "ancient aliens produced it." It makes sense, and it works. It solves the problem of the origins of life on our planet. We don't need to discuss human origins in general. We're just going to talk about how humans developed here in our home world.

Deliberate DNA Manipulation

Of course, a follow-up question always causes concern. What if DNA-carrying bacteria were deliberately sent here? What if an ancient civilization faced extinction due to, for instance, its star going nova or another cosmic catastrophe such as the one made famous when Superman's home planet exploded? What if they just wanted to plant the seed of life in the garden of the galaxy?

A surprising number of scientists are willing to consider such a thing. They reason that our so-called "junk" DNA, the 97 percent of DNA that we can't figure out, really contains coded messages that tell us who we are and why we are here. In other words, we are the aliens.

If that turns out to be true, then it's simply a cosmic version of the Atlantis myth, wherein a civilization here on Earth was destroyed, leaving the

survivors to spread the seed of their lost culture throughout the world.

As we have seen, many of the ancient myths speak of a time when humans were "created," or deliberately designed, by gods, alien visitors, or ancient survivors of a prehuman civilization catastrophe. Although such scenarios sound rather fanciful, it's awfully hard to conceive of the complexity required to produce life, especially human life with all of our reasoning and intuitive skills, by blind chance alone. We would almost be forced to adapt a creationist position if modern science asserted pure accidental mutations.

However, modern science doesn't assert this at all. The current position of cutting-edge science is that biological evolution is part of a systemic web involving orderly, nonrandom, dynamic connections. On Earth, this evolution produced physical, chemical, and thermal conditions that were just right. We live in a Goldilocks zone of perfect conditions and precisely coordinated laws. Even a minute change in any of these laws would have resulted in a cessation of the events that produced life as we know it.

In the end, we are forced to consider that the argument is not "design *versus* evolution" as much as it is "design *for* evolution." Any attempt to postulate help from the outside to determine whether or not life itself, including civilizations, developed here on its own just puts off the inevitable question. If we had help, as the ancient myths claim, then how did our "help" come into existence?

That led us even further down the rabbit hole. If our civilization could not have come into its own without help from the outside, as it were, how did previous civilizations arise? Where did their help come from? If a civilization is needed to produce another civilization, if life is needed to create life, where did the process begin? Could it be that even a previous universe is needed to produce a universe? If so, how did the first one begin?

Was Our Universe the First?

This brings us to a concept that is very difficult to wrap our minds around. It is mathematically possible, perhaps even probable, but it is so far removed from day-to-day experience that it is very difficult to talk about. It's called the multiverse.

In an earlier chapter, we considered a quantum physics theory that says

that every possible outcome of every possible choice will occur, but we will only be aware of one of them at a time. Every possible world is created; thus, every possible civilization will happen. In an infinite number of worlds and an infinite number of universes, an infinite number of people exist who all think they are observing the particular civilization they inhabit and thinking it's the only physical reality possible.

There are an infinite number of universes with an infinite number of possibilities. All of them are real and have meaning.

Why does life exist in our universe? Because we happen to inhabit one of an infinite number of universes in which life was formed as part of the wave function collapse, which produced this particular environment.

Civilization happened on Earth, life arose on Earth, our own particular individual life came to be because it is only one of an infinite number of possibilities, each of which arose somewhere, sometime. Everything, including the creation of life, that could possibly happen, everywhere and anywhere, has indeed happened somewhere, but because we, as observers, only see it from our small, physical perspective, we think this is the sum total of everything. We call it reality and search for its origin and meaning, but it is only one of an infinite number of realities. They all exist. They are all real. They all have meaning.

Every choice and experience that our ancestors made led inevitably to us, but it also led to something else that another "us" thinks was inevitable as

well. Universes exist in which life never began at all. No civilizations ever arose. Universes also exist where they did but evolved in a totally different direction. All we know is our own, so we feel a subjective experience of uniqueness.

It's driven by the principle of decoherence. To recap what we said earlier, different nuances exist in the way the theory is described, but they are basically variations on "wave collapse" theories. This is the theory that material reality is created when one of an infinite number of possibilities "collapses" into our physical world. The general parameters of it are now considered mainstream, even if physicists will argue interminably about how it operates.

They are all interesting, and this isn't the place to delve too deeply into the waters of decoherence, but the bottom line is that life originated in this universe because we exist in a universe in which it did. Once that happened, human life became inevitable, and once that occurred, civilization was assured.

We can't explain much, and much is unexplainable. Maybe we are approaching the limits of understanding, but is it possible that the universe is somehow conscious and living a material life through our evolution and physical experience?

If any possibility exists, no matter how remote, that Purpose is winding its way through time, we have to at least also consider the possibility that previous civilizations had their day in the sun, learned to see objective reality through their own subjective lenses, and then, their time over, disappeared into oblivion and were forgotten. Perhaps that process is what is known as the search for the meaning of life.

If that's true, it means that civilizations come with a shelf life. They inform, either physically or through some kind of psychic memory that is passed down through the web of life, whatever it is that follows. We are thus built on previous experience. We stand on the shoulders of our ancestors.

That's called evolution. What occurs *now* is informed by what happened *before*, and what happens *now* informs what will *follow*.

If any of this is true, then according to some cosmic clock, ticking out the seconds of eternity, other civilizations have lived, learned, and died after depositing their experience in the memory banks of some cosmic, dare we

say psychic, computer. Someday, we will join them, but before we do, maybe we can learn to access their experiences. That would certainly be an evolutionary leap forward!

That insight leads us to a concept that might someday make it possible for historians to unlock the secrets of what has come before. If the previous experience of lost, ancient civilizations is stored in a kind of cosmic memory bank somewhere, can we learn to access the information?

With that question, we enter the mystic domains called—by ancients and moderns alike—Akasha.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

So far, we have searched for lost, ancient civilizations by looking for evidence in stone and evidence in story. According to conventional wisdom, these are the only two avenues open to us, but conventional wisdom aside, does another possibility exist? Think of the cosmos as a vast, infinite computer. Call it consciousness. It is in search of an experience of itself in space and time. It gathers information and stores it in its vast memory banks. We'll call those memory banks the field of Akasha.

In my book *Supernatural Gods*, I talked at length about the Akashic field. Here's just one sample:

> How do we sum up something that awesome and mysterious? It is, after all, the biggest mystery we can possibly research. What we're saying is that All That Is shares something radical with us. Or maybe it would be better to put it another way. All That Is has imprinted itself on our conscious selves. It took a while, in earthly time, for it to kick in. But when the first humans crawled back into those great painted caves 40,000 years ago, or gazed in wonder at the night sky and wondered where they came from, the human race had finally evolved to the point where the real work of discovery could begin. We were able to think symbolically. We had religious thoughts—spiritual inclinations. We were off to the races and haven't stopped since. We had glimpsed our Grail and were off on our quest for Supernatural Gods.

Now consider the possibility that all we know and experience is just one small chapter. We've considered the possibility that civilizations come and

go, each learning from its own experience and storing information in stone and story so that another civilization can arise and share in its collected wisdom. The Sphinx, the Pyramids, Göbekli Tepe, Cusco, the civilizations of ancient Mesopotamia, the cliff dwellings of the American Southwest, and the underground complex of Derinkuyu all teach us something. If nothing else, they have bequeathed to us the gift of curiosity. They lift our eyes to the heavens and make us wonder if something more is out there, something bigger, something lost but not forgotten.

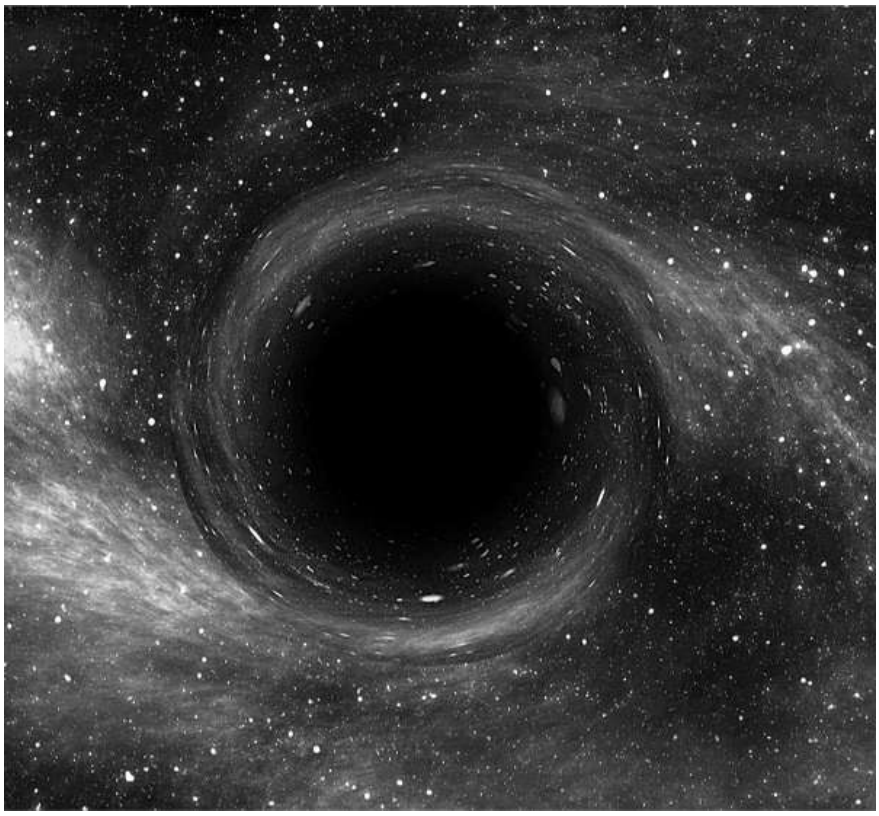
That is a precious gift.

Now let's move even further afield. If a civilization can leave in its wake both the gift of wonder and practical information, what about a whole universe?

Can one universe really inform another in an eternal process called evolution? Within that universe, does one civilization develop and inform the next? Are we simply one in a long line of civilizations that existed on our planet—one in an endless progression of experience-gathering, biological cells of inspiration and information? Were we shaped by civilizations from other planets? Will we someday travel through space and help shape a future civilization on some other planet?

Who can say? Evidence does exist, though, that a few gifted people are even now able to build on an ancient shamanic wisdom, pierce the veil, and explore what might be called the Akashic library, that place where every experience undertaken by every civilization—indeed, every person—is stored.

Physicists speculate that information cannot be destroyed. Anything entering a black hole, for instance, somehow remains viable, however spread out it may become. It's interesting to think that somehow, if we continue to evolve, we might someday be able to approach a point in our development where we can access information from our past. It's still out there, somewhere. What a gift for a historian!



Physicists know nothing can really be destroyed. Even in a black hole, the energy and mass is not consumed but, rather, preserved and trapped. Perhaps some day we will be able to access that information.

Some people glimpse such information during past-life regression therapy or while having out-of-body or near-death experiences. Ervin László explores such a possibility in his book *Science and the Akashic Field.* He believes that consciousness is, quite literally, being "in-formed," meaning the process of being "formed," of its own existence through the material cosmos:

> There is an explanation for the phenomena that puzzles today's front-line investigators; we can understand what processes underlie the nonlocal coherence of the human body, of all life, of the quantum, and of the entire universe. It is the presence of information throughout the cosmos, carried and conveyed by the universal information field we have named the Akashic field. The actions of this subtle but real A-field explains the non-locality of the smallest measureable units of the universe as well as its largest structures. It explains the coherence of living organisms, and their coherence with the milieu in which they live and evolve. It also explains the coherence of the human brain and consciousness

associated with it, in regard to the brain and consciousness of other human beings, and even the world at large. And it explains the astounding fact that the physical parameters of the universe are so finely adjusted that living organisms can exist and evolve on this planet, and possibly on countless other planets in this and other galaxies.

Once, we told marvelous stories about ancient gods and founders of glorious civilizations. They were real to us. They meant something.

In the tradition of Albert Einstein, let's perform something akin to one of his famous thought experiments. Let's imagine a scenario and see where it leads us.

Imagine that you've lost something. You want to get it back because it's important to you. What do you do?

Well, the first thing is to retrace your steps to see where you've been. You try to remember the path you were on that led you to where you now are.

That's what we've been doing so far in this book. We've lost the knowledge of who we are and how we got here. We are a species with amnesia.

Once, we built great stone monuments. They required great energy, resources, time, blood, sweat, and tears. They took us thousands of years of sustained effort to construct them. They consumed our minds and hearts. They were important to us. However, we've forgotten how and why we did it.

Once, we told marvelous stories about ancient gods and founders of glorious civilizations. They were real to us. They meant something. They shaped us. However, we've lost touch with them. Now they are just figments of a forgotten memory.

Where did we lose something that was once so important to us? We need to go looking for our lost past.

Therefore, we retrace our steps. That which we've lost hasn't disappeared. It's somewhere. We just don't know where. We search high and low and—nothing. What's happened? Where is it?

When we have looked everywhere, we do something important. We stop and think. We use our minds rather than our eyes and ears.

Then comes the light. We remember where we put it. We journey there, and there it is. Right where we left it. We always find a lost object in the last place we look, right? It's hiding in the one place we never thought of.

Where is our lost history? It's hiding in the one place we haven't thought of. It's right there in our imagination.

Why did we build monuments of stone? Because we imagined them to be symbols and representations of something we visualized in our minds.

Why did we tell fanciful tales and invent complex mythologies? Because we were trying to talk about something that we could imagine but not quite capture with mere words.

Stone and stories are symbols of that which we once imagined. To find the reality, we can't stop with the symbols. We need to look *past* the symbols to the eternal realities that the symbols represent. Our history isn't lost. We just misplaced it. It's right there in our minds. It is stored in every cell that courses through our bodies. It's hiding in our imagination. We remember. We've just suppressed the memory. The trauma of our life experience has made us choose to forget. The busy activity that fills our days keeps us from stopping and thinking—and imagining.

How do you recover lost memories? You stop, you sit quietly, you enter into a state of peace and stillness, and you return to the moment of trauma that caused you to forget—to suppress the memory of where you were and what you were doing.

That moment of trauma occurred when your civilization came crashing down around you, when everything collapsed. You built Stonehenge and thought it would last forever. Then something traumatic happened, and it didn't. You built the Pyramids and thought the gods would forever protect you from the vicissitudes of life, but they didn't, and life as you know it ended. You lived a good life in the American West, but then, a fiery comet fell out of the skies and destroyed everything you held dear. You constructed a system of worldwide trade that brought every conceivable comfort of life

right to your doorstep. Then came the flood, and in one terrible day and night, your capital city and everything you knew was submerged beneath the waves.

Those were traumas. It's no wonder that you've suppressed the memory of what once was. You forgot who you were. You developed amnesia. All that was left was rubble and the clouded memory of some forgotten tales.

However, the information is still there. It's hiding in plain sight in the windmills of your mind. If you can imagine it, you can recover it. Reboot your mental computer. Search out your memory banks. Go to the hidden recesses of your imagination, and you'll find the lost information. It's right there in the last place you'll think to look.

You haven't lost your identity. You've just misplaced it.

A Theory of Civilizations

With that thought in mind, we're going to attempt the impossible. We're going to try to develop an overarching theory of civilization based on everything we explored so far. We're going to take what we learned from the evidence left in stone and the evidence left in story, add to it a fertile, questioning imagination, throw in a dash of quantum speculation, and answer the questions we put before ourselves way back at the beginning.

Do you remember what they were?

- *Who* are we?
- *What* gives our life meaning?
- *Where* did we come from?
- *When* did we begin our journey?
- *Why* does life seem so difficult at times?

We began by defining, at least for our purposes, what a civilization is:

> A civilization is any group of people who come together over time to demonstrate a capacity for uniquely human qualities that distinguish them from their animal ancestors. Such qualities include, but are not necessarily limited to, attributes such as shared moral values, technology, an appreciation for beauty in art, a spiritual yearning for meaning in the face of a limited life span, and a search for ultimate reality.

Now let’s form our theory and, one at a time, try to answer the questions.

To begin, instead of picturing the cosmos as a large, empty space, a container for all that is, think of it instead as a living, breathing, self-contained entity in search of a material experience of itself. That’s close to how our ancestors used to imagine it, although they would not have used those words. To them, the cosmos was alive and vibrant, full of gods and animated spirits. They talked to it. They bargained with it. They tried to propitiate and appease it. The trees were an expression of one spirit. The river another. The mountain was the home of thunder beings. The stars sang at night. Everything was alive and connected. Everything!

That belief system is not much different from the interconnected, entangled world of quantum physics. The Zen master and the theoretical physicist say the same thing. All is one. Everything is connected. Everything is animated. Only the language has changed. The essential meaning remains the same. According to the Gaia theory, Earth is alive—a single, interconnected organism. The war cry of the Plains Indians expressed a great reality. “Only the mountains last forever. It’s a good day to die!”

Civilizations come and go, people come and go, but the process of life goes on forever.

That implies a great truth. Based on that, here’s a theory of civilization: The multiverse is conscious, seeking an experience of itself in time and space. We are part of that process. Human beings are one in a long line of thinking, intelligent species that exist both in the vast reaches of space and the infinite arena of time. In that sense, we are one cell in an infinite, eternal body. We clump together, we form civilizations, they live out their time, and then, like every other physical organ, they die, but they are evolving upward from the physical to the spiritual. In that sense, they come to a point in time and space when they face a choice. Do they go the way of temporal power, hubris, ego, and comfort, or do they choose to turn from that path and follow the way of love, compassion, and spiritual growth?

On that choice hangs the future.

s far as we know, every civilization on Earth, including our own if

As we believe the daily newspapers, has chosen the path of worldly might and power.

If they choose worldly might and power, they will eventually go the way of Atlantis and drown, submerged beneath the sea of history. If they choose spiritual values, they can return to the paradise of Eden.

Here, we again quote Ervin László from his book *Science and the Akashic Field*:

> Even if the evolution of the universe is uncertain, evolution within the universe can have an overall direction. This is because the universe is coherent and consistent: in it, one thing entails another. When one choice is made, the cascade of consequences continues until the final state is reached. There is no need for setting a specific goal at the beginning: the goal is generated in the process itself. It is one toward which evolution in this universe generally trends; it is what gives it overall direction. The direction is toward greater and greater coherence and complexity.

As far as we know, every civilization on Earth, including our own if we believe the daily newspapers, has chosen the path of worldly might and power. They became "lost" to history.

However, the key words in that first sentence are "as far as we know." It's very possible that ancient civilizations exist, or at least significant numbers of people within them, who made the right choice, who left only a miniscule footprint on the ecology of the planet, who chose the path of spiritual development and lofty values and quietly folded their tents, escaping into the proverbial mists of Avalon. Like Enoch of old, it might be said of them, "They walked with God, and they were not, for God took them." We won't find the rubble and ruin they left behind, for they left nothing in their wake. Oral legends, ancient mythology from around the world, and religious texts hint at their existence. Perhaps they're still out there, separated from us by small degrees of frequency rather than light years of distance. Who can say for sure?

Meanwhile, every day for us is a new day and offers fresh choices.

James Russell Lowell of Cambridge, Massachusetts, when facing a time

of strife and dissension in 1845, protested America's war with Mexico with these words:

Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide

In the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side.…

And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that darkness and that light.

That choice is now, and forever, before us. Our collective choice sways the future.

With all this in mind, let's tackle the questions that began our study of ancient civilizations. They remind us that we are not merely looking for interesting facts of history. We are searching for our identity and place in the great scheme of eternity.

Who Are We?

Based on our theory of civilizations, let's employ a metaphor from biology and suggest that each of us, individually, is a single cell in a material body called the cosmos. Like cells, we come and go, but we clump together to form organs called civilizations. These organs function within a physical body.

The cells that form your physical organs are constantly coming and going, winking in and out of existence. Not one cell is in your body that was present within you when you were born, but the organs that formed in your mother's womb still remain, changed only by evolutionary growth toward maturity and, eventually, death.

Thus it is that individual entities, from simple, one-celled structures to complex civilizations, make up the body of the cosmos. We wink in and out of existence, but the body continues. Eventually, over almost inconceivable and unfathomable eons of time, the cosmos will reach maturity and die, but from the ashes of that death in space and time will arise a phoenix ready to live and thrive and gather even more experiences of itself. The death of our universe will spark another Big Bang somewhere in a new space and a new time, and a new universe will come into existence, eventually forming life and new cells, new organs called civilizations, and new opportunities.

The entire universe can be seen as a living being, and we are each a small part of that being's quest to experience itself through us.

We are nothing more than individual cells that allow consciousness to experience itself in material space and time.

We are nothing less, either.

What Gives Our Life Meaning?

Does this insight, if true, subtract meaning from our lives? Does it make us feel insignificant, as though we are too small to count for anything?

Only if we choose to look at it that way. I believe that another more valuable way to judge ourselves is possible. If consciousness needs a body in order to experience itself, it needs us. Substitute the word "God" for consciousness, and the meaning becomes even more momentous. "God" needs us. In our present incarnation on this planet, the human race is the very body of consciousness—of Divinity—of God. Other civilizations, perhaps even prehuman civilizations, may have come and gone, but we are here now. That makes us the hottest commodity in the universe.

All life forms are important. The extinction of any species is a terrible thing, but we are the civilization of the moment because we are able to step

aside and be aware of our existence. We can ask the big questions. Forty thousand years ago, when a group of talented shamans entered the great, painted caves of Europe, experienced the magic, and came out spiritual beings capable of symbolic vision, when they experienced the great "Other" and lifted their eyes to the heavens, when they began to contemplate eternity and infinity, we became another in a long line of civilizations who have gone before. We joined in the procession.

It remains to be seen what our contribution yet will be, but because we have the potential to even *make* a contribution, we are important. *You* are important. Don't waste good.

Where Did We Come From?

That's the big question, isn't it? Did human life evolve on this planet, or were we seeded from outside? Are civilizations inevitable, or were they somehow planted and left to grow? Are we the result of intention or blind chance? Does the answer somehow lie in the range of "all of the above"?

We can't even narrow our genesis down to other places in the cosmos. Are, indeed, spiritual forces at work? Does our twenty-first-century civilization sit at the top of the ladder, or are we just another rung on the long climb up? Are we destined to make the choice that will culminate in the end of it all, or will we, too, fail in our responsibility, as so many have before us?

Eight question marks were used to write those last two paragraphs. On this one, the jury is still out.

When Did We Begin Our Journey?

It depends on where you want to put the starting line.

If you think in terms of human civilization, beginning with things like architecture, writing, and agriculture, then ours began either six thousand or eight thousand years ago in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, or 11,600 years ago at Göbekli Tepe, depending on which archaeologist you talk to. If you consider those early ancestors to be the inheritors of civilization rather than the inventors of it, then we go deep into the last Ice Age.

If you mark the starting line at when we developed a capacity for symbolic, aka religious, thought, then we've been around for more than forty thousand years.

If you want to go back to the beginning of the human species, we're two hundred thousand, maybe even three hundred thousand, years old and still growing. Hopefully.

If you consider the human species to be only one incarnation in a long line of species that might have contributed civilizations to Earth's history, the dates get a little murky. After all, we have about 4.5 billion years to consider.

If you conceive of our civilization as riding the point of a spear thrown by consciousness into an arc of time so as to experience itself in space, then the sky's the limit—or perhaps, that's not an accurate phrase. For now, we are back in a time way before a sky existed.

If this present cosmos is only one of an infinite cell in a multiverse that is somehow intent on creating physical life over and over again until it gets it right, then we're dealing with infinity. Who among us can really think in those terms?

Why Does Life Seem So Difficult at Times?

Why, indeed? Sometimes, it feels as if we're the victim of a cosmic joke.

We can conceive of eternity, but we can't live forever.

We can experience love, but we are too often confronted with hate.

Achievement seems to be almost within our grasp but just out of reach.

Even our happiest moments are tinged with regret, because we know they won't last.

A perfect moment in time can be shattered by the thoughtless words of a complete stranger, a fool at that.

I wish I could offer some hopeful words here. After a long career as a writer, professor, teacher, minister, musician, and counselor, words are supposed to be my specialty. All I can share is what sometimes brings me a modicum of comfort.

I have come to believe that we are a small part of something so big and stupendous that it is impossible for us to really get our heads around it. The reason we can't figure it out is because it's too big for our minds to comprehend.

Our time on Earth, maybe even our times on Earth, if the concept of reincarnation proves viable, will be seen as only a match snap in the darkness of eternity.

When I was a kid, I used to get depressed waiting for Christmas. It took so looooooong to get here. It seemed like Christmas would never arrive. Now looking back on those days, I can see what, from my present position of maturity, was really only a few weeks, starting at roughly Thanksgiving. It was a very small amount of time in the long run. I can't imagine why I put myself in such a frazzle.

Someday, when the last human civilization folds up its tent to make room for whatever comes next, we'll probably have a front-row seat. Our time on Earth, maybe even our times on Earth, if the concept of reincarnation proves viable, will be seen as only a match snap in the darkness of eternity. I like to think that what seems momentous now will be considered trivial then. It helps me keep a sort of perspective. Perhaps, when you come right down to it, even the life span of an entire civilization is really nothing more than a day in the life of eternity.

We began this project by searching out lost, ancient civilizations. We sought to discover the true origins of humankind and to explore the hidden histories of technologically and culturally advanced civilizations.

In the end, we may have only scratched the surface. Hopefully, the questions will continue to prod us onward. Will ours be a significant contribution to the history of civilizations on Earth? Will we become a good or bad example for future civilizations to emulate or disregard?

Right now, it appears as if we are doing more harm than good. We are tampering with the climate of an entire planet. We are producing more people than its resources can accommodate. We are building both weapons of mass destruction and better ways to deliver them to unsuspecting targets. We can digitally enter into the privacy of individual homes and wreak all kinds of destruction both physically and emotionally.

We are a species with great potential for both good and evil. The more I study history, the more I am amazed by the inventive ways we can hurt and

destroy one another.

However, we are capable of great good as well. The examples are all around us. If our civilization is a crucible, created and observed by other species unknown, either physical or spiritual, we must be offering quite a potpourri of possibilities.

We can speculate all we want about such things, but we know one thing to be true. Whether civilization is a planned exercise or a random accident, it's all we have, and we can choose what to do with it.

In the words of James Russell Lowell, "the choice goes by forever 'twixt that darkness and that light."

May all your choices be good ones!

Further Reading

Ashton, John, and Tom Whyte. *The Quest for Paradise: Visions of Heaven and Eternity in the World's Myths and Religions*. New York: Harper Collins, 2001.

Bauval, Robert, and Adrian Gilbert. *The Orion Mystery*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1994.

Bullfinch's Mythology. New York: Gramercy Books, 1979

Campbell, Joseph. *Transformations of Myth through Time*. New York: Harper & Row, 1990.

Campbell, Joseph, with Bill Moyers. *The Power of Myth*. New York: Bantam, Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1988.

Childress, David Hatcher, and Brien Foerster. *The Enigma of Cranial Deformation: Elongated Skulls of the Ancients*. Kempton, IL: Adventures Unlimited Press, 2012.

Christian, David. *Origin Story: A Big History of Everything*. New York, Boston, London: Little, Brown, 2018.

Chopra, Depak, and Leonard Mlodinonow. *War of the World View: Science versus Spirituality*. New York: Harmony Books, 2011.

Collins, Andrew. *Atlantis in the Caribbean and the Comet That Changed the World*. Rochester, VT: Bear & Co, 2000.

———. *The Cygnus Key: The Denisovan Legacy, Göbekli Tepe, and the Birth of Egypt.* Rochester, VT: Bear & Co, 2018

———. *The Cygnus Mystery*. London, UK: Watkins Publishing, 2006.

———. *Göbekli Tepe: Genesis of the Gods*. Rochester, VT: Bear & Co., 2014.

Dennett, Daniel. *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life*. New York: Touchstone, 1996.

Diamond, Jared. *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. New York: Penguin, 2006.

Durant, Will and Ariel. *The Lessons of History*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968.

Fell, Barry. *America B.C.: Ancient Settlers in the New World*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1976.

———. *Saga America*. New York. NY: Times Books, 1980.

Felser, Joseph M. *The Way Back to Paradise: Restoring the Balance Between Magic and Reason*. Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing, 2005.

Fisher, Mary Pat, and Lee W. Bailey. *An Anthology of Living Religions*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000.

Flem-Ath, Rand and Rose. *Atlantis Beneath the Ice: The Fate of the Lost Continent*. Rochester, VT: Bear and Company, 1995.

Freeman, Gordon R. *Hidden Stonehenge*. London: Watkins Publishing, 2012.

Gooch, Stan. *The Dream Culture of the Neanderthals: Guardians of Ancient Wisdom*. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2006.

Gould, Stephen J. *Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life*. New York: Ballantine, 1999.

Hancock, Graham. *America Before: The Key to Earth's Lost Civilization*. New York: St. Martin's, 2019.
———. *Fingerprints of the Gods*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1995.
———. *Magicians of the Gods*. New York: St. Martin's, 2015.
———. *The Sign and the Seal*. New York: Crown, 1992.
———. *Supernatural*. New York: Disinformation Company, 2007.
———. *Underworld: The Mysterious Origins of Civilization*. New York: Crown, 2002.
Hapgood, Charles. *The Earth's Shifting Crust*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1958.
———. *Maps of the Ancient Sea Kings: Evidence of Advanced Civilization in the Ice Age*. Kempton, IL: Adventures Unlimited Press, 1966.
———. *The Path of the Pole*. Kempton, IL: Adventures Unlimited Press, 1999.
Harner, Michael. *Cave and Cosmos.* Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2013.
———. *The Way of the Shaman.* San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980.
Herbert, Nick. *Quantum Reality.* New York: Random House, 1985.
Highwater, Jamake. *The Primal Mind: Vision and Reality in Indian America.* New York: Harper & Row, 1981.
Hitching, Francis. *Earth Magic.* New York: William Morrow, 1977.
James, Peter, and Nick Thorpe. *Ancient Mysteries*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1999.
James, Simon. *The World of the Celts.* London, England: Thames & Hudson, 1993.
Johnson, Robert Bowie, Jr. *Genesis Characters and Events in Ancient Greek Art*. Annapolis, MD: Solving Light Books, 2004.
Jones, Prudence, and Nigel Pennick. *A History of Pagan Europe*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
Joseph, Frank. *Advanced Civilizations of Prehistoric America*. Rochester, VT: Bear & Company, 2010.
———. *Before Atlantis: 20 Million Years of Human and Pre-Human Cultures.* Rochester, VT: Bear & Company, 2013.
Kane, Sharyn, and Richard Keeton. *Beneath These Waters.* Atlanta, GA: National Park Service—Southeast Region, 1993.
Kauffman, Stuart A. *Reinventing the Sacred: A New View of Science, Reason, and Religion.* Philadelphia, PA: Basic Books, 2008.
László, Ervin. *The Akashic Experience: Science and the Cosmic Memory Field*. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2009.
———. *Science and the Akashic Field: An Integral Theory of Everything*, 2nd ed. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2007.
———. *The Whispering Pond: A Personal Guide to the Emerging Vision of Science*. Rockport, MA: Element Books, Inc., 1996.
The Lost Books of the Bible and The Forgotten Books of Eden. New York: The World Syndicate Publishing Co., 1926.
Mails, Thomas E. *Dancing in the Paths of the Ancestors.* New York: Marlowe & Co., 1999.
Martineau, John, editor. *Megaliths: Studies in Stone.* New York: Bloomsbury, 2018.
Mavor, James W., and Byron E. Dix. *Manitou.* Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions International, 1989.
Mayor, Adrienne. *Fossil Legends of the First Americans.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.
Michell, John. *The New View over Atlantis.* New York: Thames & Hudson, 1969.
Minkoff, Harvey, *The Missing Books of the Bible*, Volumes 1 and 2. New York: Halo Press/Ottenheimer Publishers, 1996.
Morgan, Elaine. *The Aquatic Ape Hypothesis*. London: Souvenir Press, 1997.
Morris, Desmond. *The Naked Ape*. New York: Dell, 1973.

Mowat, Farley. *The Farfarers*. South Royalton, VT: Steereforth Press, 2000.
Osborne, Robert. *Civilization: A New History of the Western World.* New York: Pegasus Books, 2006.
Prabhupada, A. C. Bhaktivedanta. *Bhagavad-Gita as It Is.* Los Angeles: International Society for Krishna Consciousness, 1984.
Roberts, David. *In Search of the Old Ones*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.
Rolleston, T. W. *Myths & Legends of the Celtic Race*. Pantianos Classics, 2016.
Sagan, Carl. *The Dragons of Eden*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1977.
Sassaman, Kenneth E. *People of the Shoals: Stallings Culture of the Savanna River Valley.* Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2006.
Scranton, Roy. *We're Doomed. Now What?: Essays on War and Climate Change*. New York: Soho Press, 2018.
Sitchin, Janet. *The Anunnaki Chronicles: A Zecharia Sitchin Reader*. Rochester, VT: Bear & Co., 2015
Sitchin, Zecharia. *Genesis Revisited*. New York: Avon Books. 1990.
Stanford, Dennis J., and Bruce A. Bradley. *Across Atlantic Ice: The Origin of America's Clovis Culture.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012.
Temple, Robert. *The Sirius Mystery*. Rochester, VT: Destine Books, 1987.
Ulansey, David. *The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries: Cosmology Salvation in the Ancient World.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
Urquhart, David. *The Lebanon (Mount Souria): A History and a Diary.* BiblioBazaar, 2015.
Von Daniken, Eric. *Chariots of the Gods*. New York: Penguin, 1968.
Waters, Frank. *Book of the Hopi*. New York: Penguin, 1977.
Willis, Jim. *Ancient Gods: Lost Histories, Hidden Truths and the Conspiracy of Silence*. Detroit, MI: Visible Ink Press, 2016.
———. *The Religion Book: Places, Prophets, Saints and Seers*. Detroit, MI: Visible Ink Press, 2004.
———. *Supernatural Gods: Spiritual Mysteries, Psychic Experiences and Scientific Truths*. Detroit, MI: Visible Ink Press, 2017.
Willis, Jim and Barbara. *Armageddon Now: The End of the World, A-Z*. Detroit, MI: Visible Ink Press, 2006.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Having earned his master's degree in theology from Andover Newton Theological School, Jim Willis has been an ordained minister for more than forty years. He has also taught college courses in comparative religion and cross-cultural studies. In addition, Willis has been a professional musician, high school orchestra and band teacher, an arts council director, and even a drive-time radio show host. His background in theology and education led to his writings on religion, the apocalypse, cross-cultural spirituality, and the mysteries of the unknown. His books include Visible Ink Press' *Ancient Gods: Lost Histories, Hidden Truths, and the Conspiracy of Silence; The Religion Book: Places, Prophets, Saints, and Seers; Supernatural Gods: Spiritual Mysteries, Psychic Experiences, and Scientific Truths;* and *Armageddon Now: The End of the World A to Z.* He also published *Faith, Trust & Belief: A Trilogy of the Spirit.* Willis resides in the woods of South Carolina with his wife, Barbara.